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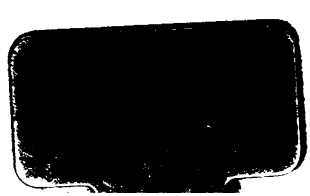

THE

HIGHLAND CASTLE,

AND THE

LOWLAND COTTAGE.

A Novel.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY

ROSALIA ST. CLAIR,

AUTHOR OF THE SON OF O'DONNEL, BLIND BEGGAR, &c. &c.

Like April-morning clouds, that pass,
With varying shadow, o'er the grass,
And imitate, on field and furrow,
Life's chequer'd scene of joy and sorrow.
WALTER SCOTT.

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THE

HIGHLAND CASTLE

CHAPTER I.

Untimely gone! for ever fled,
The roses of the cheek so red—
The affection warm, the temper mild,
The sweetness that in sorrow smiled.

Alas! the cheek where beauty glowed,
The heart where goodness overflowed,
A clod amid the valley lies,
And "dust to dust!" the mourner cries.

Oh! from thy kindred early torn,
And to thy grave untimely borne!
Vanish'd for ever from my view,
Thou sister of my soul, adieu! LOGAN.

WHILE the amiable inmates of Fairy Cottage were thus engaged in the active duties of humanity, their more

wealthy neighbours at Castle Frazer were a prey to feelings the most painful, and passions the most discordant.

Sir Simon was by turns gloomy and irascible. Vainly were all the witcheries of his lovely wife exerted to charm his wayward moods; if a gleam of good-humour rewarded her toil, it was momentary, like the lightning's flash, which quickly disappears, and renders the gloom more horrible.

Disheartened by repeated disappointments, lady Frazer at length desisted from her fruitless attempts. No expression of impatience betrayed her wounded feelings at the marked neglect, not to say rudeness, of her husband. Often, when alone, the contemplation of her forlorn state would indeed force the big drops of agony from her eyes: but long she never indulged in recollections so baneful to her repose; she flew to exercise or employment for relief from her acute sufferings, and by a course of read-

ing

ing and study, which admitted of no relaxation but a change of subjects, she obtained a salutary control over her mind and temper.

Though the numerous unamiable traits which daily displayed themselves in the character of her husband prevented Marion from longer seeking his confidence and friendship, she yet continued to treat him with such guarded politeness and courtesy, as shielded her from those sallies of passion with which he occasionally assailed every other member of his family.

In this uncomfortable state the dreary months of winter wore away: but the return of spring brought no change to the desolate breast of lady Frazer; on the contrary, the gloomy temper of the baronet at times appeared even tinctured with ferocity.

To add to the causes of her disquiet, the gentle, the affectionate Helen seemed fast hastening to the grave. She now

seldom left her bed, and in addition to her increasing weakness, her mind appeared to suffer from some hidden cause of grief.

Marion's attentions to the invalid were unremitting; day nor night she never left the side of her couch, except to snatch a few hours necessary repose.

In this sad office she was seldom interrupted by the presence of sir Simon, who, either engaged in the sports of the field, or in carousing with his hunting associates, seemed wholly indifferent to the fate of an only sister.

At this period every eye was turned to the scenes acting in France; but no one seemed to view them with greater interest than the exhausted invalid. With feverish anxiety she daily watched the arrival of the postboy; but each day terminated in disappointment, for the packet she looked for arrived not.

One morning, as sir Simon entered the sick chamber, to make his usual careless inquiry

inquiry after his sister's health, lady Frazer shuddered as she remarked an almost fiend-like joy portrayed on his countenance.

He held a newspaper in his hand, and pointing to a list of killed and wounded, he said, in an audible whisper—"My poor uncle has lost his son. Charles, I observe, has fallen in the first onset made by the British against these French rebels." And he was again leaving the room, when a low groan from the bed arrested his steps.

Lady Frazer sprung forward, and pulling aside the curtains, beheld Helen, apparently lifeless, extended across the bed. She supported her in her arms, and applied such remedies as were at hand.

The invalid soon recovered from her insensibility, but it was only to give way to the most heart-rending anguish. She wrung her wasted hands in silence, while the big tears of agony flowed down

her wan cheeks. Even the obdurate sir Simon seemed moved by the sad spectacle. With one word he could have spoke peace to the bosom of a dying sister; but avarice intervened, and he fled from a scene which his conscience told him was the work of his own hands.

Vainly did the compassionate Marion attempt to sooth her to composure.—"He is gone," she repeated, "and left me in ignorance of his wishes! The foulest treachery must have been employed to prevent me receiving his letters; and he doubtless fell, accusing me of a broken promise."

This idea, which she continued to repeat, in all the energy of despair, shook her feeble frame almost to dissolution, till exhausted nature could struggle no longer, and she sunk by degrees into an unquiet slumber.

For the remainder of the day, and through the night, her low moaning alone indicated that she was still an inhabitant

habitant of this earth. Towards the dawn, however, she awoke, calm and composed. On seeing Marion by her bedside, she gently chid her for being so careless of her own health, and insisted that she should retire to obtain a few hours' repose.

"This must be a day of business with me," she added, with a placid smile. "I wish to converse with you and my worthy old preceptor alone, when he calls to make his daily inquiries after my health; till then, leave me to arrange my scattered thoughts."

On leaving the sick-chamber, the fatigued Marion threw herself on her bed, but sleep visited not her pillow. The image of the suffering Helen, and her assertions that treachery had been employed to prevent some communication of importance reaching her from her cousin, continually recurred to her mind. In spite of herself, she had lately associated the image of sir Simon with every

thing dark and dishonourable, and a painful feeling now floated across her imagination that he would be found, somehow or other, connected with the detention of this important packet.

Unable to drive this distressing conjecture from her mind, she rose from her restless couch, and entered the breakfast-parlour.

The gentle manners of lady Frazer, and the deference she always paid to age, had softened the prejudices, and made an interest for her in the heart of aunt Janet. On observing the pale countenance and heavy eyes of her ladyship, the aged spinstress, in a voice of unusual kindness, entreated her to take some tea, and then endeavour to obtain a little repose.—"You will assuredly injure yourself, my dear niece," she continued: "be for once persuaded by me to lie down, and I will watch by Helen, and inform you when she is stirring. My nephew is strangely neglectful, to allow you to take

take so much fatigue—but the men are all alike."

Marion, whose fortitude neglect could not subdue, yielded to this unexpected kindness, and throwing her arms round the neck of aunt Janet, she laid her head on her bosom, and sobbed aloud.

At this moment the baronet entered the apartment.—"Heyday!" he exclaimed, in a careless tone, "are you taking a lesson in the dismals, old girl, which seem to be the order of the day in this dwelling?"

Marion raised her head from the shoulder of her aged relative, and, with a look of mild but reproachful dignity, replied—"If sir Simon Frazer can forget that an only sister lies at the point of death, I cannot banish from my remembrance that I am about to lose my earliest and best-beloved friend."

It was the first reproachful word that lady Frazer had ever uttered, and it stung the haughty baronet to the soul.

Conscience-stricken, he was forced to admit the reproof was just; but, a stranger to that greatness of mind which can acknowledge an error, he remained sullen and silent.

During breakfast, the entrance of Mr M'Gregor gave a new turn to his thoughts. The reverend pastor was scarcely seated, before lady Frazer made known to him the request of the dying Helen.

The good divine raised his tearful eyes towards heaven.—"Alas, my lady!" he replied, "the pure soul of your angelic sister can harbour no concealed guilt; but I have thought of late that her mind labours under some hidden grief, the disclosure of which, I trust, will give peace to her last moments."

The countenance of the baronet assumed a livid hue, but he constrained the expression of his feelings, and merely said, that he had long suspected his sister was hopelessly attached to her cousin,

cousin, and he had been confirmed in this opinion by the effect which the sudden information of his death produced.

Lady Fraser instinctively shrunk from the indelicacy of thus exposing the weakness of his sister, though a vague suspicion of the same kind had more than once crossed her mind: but time was not allowed for further reflection, as a summons from the invalid hurried her and her reverend friend to the sick-chamber.

Two hours they remained by the bedside of the patient, when Mr. M'Gregor again joined his former pupil; but lady Fraser appeared no more below during the course of this day.

The silence of the divine alarmed the watchful terrors of the baronet, till, losing all patience, he inquired whether his conjecture respecting the state of his sister's affections was correct?

"Of that I cannot inform you," said the worthy pastor, "for the timid deli-

cacy of Miss Frazer would, unquestionably, under any circumstances, have shrunk from such an unnecessary exposure of her weakness, but more especially at a moment like the present, when her mind, weaned from all the ties and affections of this sublunary world, is looking forward to that country where crime or sorrow can find no entrance. Happy will it be for us, sir Simon, if the whole tenor of our lives, like that of your amiable sister, has been a continual preparation for a deathbed—then will the last moment of our lives be calm and peaceful as hers.'

The chastened sadness of the old man, his serious tones, and the humble confidence with which he contemplated a change from which the worldling shrinks with dismay, made a momentary impression on the obdurate heart of the baronet. But, unused to the reproaches of his own mind, he no sooner got rid of his aged guest, than he again began to anticipate

ticipate the eventual wealth which would become his at the death of his uncle.

The pangs that lacerated the heart of that worthy uncle, from the untimely fall of his beloved and only son, were unthought of, or if the idea crossed his mind, it was hastily dismissed, as an unwelcome intruder. His sister's desire to see Mr. M'Gregor he now placed to the account of religion, and almost rejoiced that she would soon be beyond the power of prying into his concerns.

From this day the mind of Helen became gradually more serene; she even looked forward with pleasure to the hour of her dissolution. A pang would indeed rend her heart when she thought of the unworthy treatment which the beloved friend of her youth was daily receiving from her brother—and, to comfort and sustain that friend, she would still have lingered in this vale of tears. But it could not be; her constitution, always delicate, had suffered greatly

greatly from grief and anxiety for her cousin, and his death, unexpectedly communicated to her, while she still remained ignorant in what way she could fulfil the solemn and binding promise he had exacted, gave an additional shock to her frame, which it was unable to support.

The death of her beloved Helen came upon lady Fraser like a thunder-stroke. The shock brought on a premature confinement, and long she remained in the most extreme danger.

Aunt Janet attended her with unremitting kindness; indeed it seemed as if her nature had undergone a complete change. Marion was grateful for her attention, yet she languished for the enlightened converse of the friend she had lost.

Sir Simon, for the first few days of her confinement, constrained himself to pay her some attention; but when his eyes rested on the weak feeble form of his future

future heir, his chagrin overcame every sense of humanity, and he mingled his lamentations over his disappointed hopes with bitter sarcasms against his unoffending wife.

Weak in body, and depressed in mind, lady Fraser had almost ceased to struggle against the melancholy which assailed her, when the feeble cries of her babe reminded her that she had still an important duty to perform. Folding her infant to her breast with all the natural fondness of a mother, she mentally resolved to check the wayward repinings of her heart, and watch over the dawn of its existence.

A young healthy nurse, the wife of a cottager, had been procured during the extremity of Marion's illness; but for several weeks the child gave no other indications of life except by low mournful cries. At the termination of two months, however, it began gradually to acquire greater strength, and in a short

time

time repaid, by its sweet smiles, the watchful cares of its mother.

The spring circuit brought Mr. Ferguson to Inverness; and Marion for a while forgot her sorrows when folded in the arms of her affectionate brother.

So great an adept was sir Simon Frazer at duplicity, and so well did he enact the kind and attentive husband during Mr. Ferguson's short stay at the Castle, that the worthy advocate was completely deceived; he even blamed in his own mind the unbending reserve of his sister's manners towards her husband: but with lady Frazer the age of credulity was past, and she no longer met the partial sunshine on her husband's brow with a corresponding smile, for she knew it was only assumed to cover a cold and rancorous heart.

Mr. Ferguson accompanied the baronet and his sister on a visit to Fairy Cottage; and before the day was finished, his heart claimed kindred with every inhabitant

habitant of this charming abode. He was more especially attracted to little Bouverie, who, in his turn, was highly delighted with his new acquaintance. There was an open fearlessness in his brow, and a look of intelligence in his full hazel eye, that found their way to the heart of the lawyer. He displayed none of that early precocity which is seldom the forerunner of great talents in after-life; but there was an aptitude of comprehension, a kind of intuitive perception, observable in his manner of imbibing the simple ideas that were presented to him, which indicated a capacity of no common vigour.

Before dinner Bouverie had drawn Mr. Ferguson from the rest of the party, and led him to all his little haunts. His botanic garden, as he termed a square plot of ground, enriched with a specimen of each of the twenty-four classes of Linnæus—his collection of cork models of various mechanical inventions—his shells

vourite of his, but he had hitherto treated him with brotherly cordiality—now he could scarcely maintain the same show of friendship towards him; yet for Marion's sake he checked his rising anger, and joined the party in the saloon.

Approaching the interesting mistress of the mansion, who stood at one of the windows with his sister—"I have been breaking," said he, "the commandment which forbids us to covet any thing that is our neighbour's, in as far as regards your little Bouverie."

"He is indeed an interesting boy," replied Marion, with a low sigh, which did not, however, escape the ear of her brother; "and as he is intended for one of the professions, I think you cannot do better than run off with him a few years hence, and make him, like yourself, an advocate, learned in the laws.—I am sure," she added, pressing Mrs. Frazer's hand in hers, with a sweet smile, "if my brother renders him equally worthy

as

as himself, you will have cause to be proud of your son."

"Flatterer!" rejoined the advocate, playfully laying his hand on her mouth. "But to be serious, Mrs. Fraser, if you and the captain approve of my sister's suggestion, you will, at any time, find me ready to fulfil that share in the contract she has assigned to me."

Mrs. Fraser's eloquent look and moistened eye spoke her thanks more forcibly than words could have done, and dinner being announced, put an end to the conversation.

In spite of all his efforts to the contrary, there was, from this day, a constraint visible in Mr. Ferguson's manners towards the baronet, which did not pass unobserved by the latter. The vicious are always self-tormentors; and sir Simon tortured himself with the idea that his conduct towards Bertha Campbell had, by some means or other, reached the ear of his brother-in-law.

Another

Another source of vexation had found entrance into his breast, from a conversation which passed at the dinner table of captain Frazer.

After lamenting the severe disappointment of all lord William Frazer's hopes by the untimely fall of his son, Mr. Ferguson expressed a hope that the forlorn mourner might be induced to form a matrimonial connexion with some amiable woman, who would fill up the void left in his widowed heart.

All present joined in the benevolent wish, the baronet excepted, who could scarcely control his chagrin at the bare mention of such a possibility. Had he risked so much to secure the splendid possessions of his uncle, and might they after all be wrested from his grasp? His sapient brother-in-law, too, whom he had regarded as a confirmed bachelor—was he an advocate for marriage? The next step would be to marry himself. Gladly did he hail the day that was to

relieve

relieve him from the mask he deemed it necessary to assume in the presence of Mr. Ferguson, and he saw him depart with a degree of satisfaction he in vain attempted to conceal. Not so his sorrowing wife; for though she so far commanded her feelings as to bid adieu to her brother with calmness, he was no sooner gone, than she felt, with renewed bitterness, her forlorn and desolate condition.

CHAP-

CHAPTER II.

" Fondness for gold no other fondness bears—
No brother's kindness—no parental cares;
Gold bids whole hosts in horrid wars contend;
Through this the good untimely meet their end.
But, worse than all, the thirst for gold destroys
The bonds of love, and nature's purest joys."

SUMMER wore away with lady Frazer in the same joyless state. Her unwearied attention to her infant was, however, at length rewarded by the pleasing hope that, in spite of the weakness consequent on premature birth, he might yet live to reward her toils. But even that hope came to her heart mingled with bitterness, for her mind darted forward to the period when, in imprinting on his young mind the lessons of morality—in teaching him to abhor treachery, dissimulation,

dissimulation, and cruelty, she must teach him to despise his father.

More circumscribed became each day the few comforts of this admirable woman: if she spent a day at Fairy Cottage in the sweet delight of social converse, it only, by contrast, darkened with a deeper tinge the gloomy colour of her own fate.

Fain would sir Simon have found, in the weakness or imperfection of her character, an excuse for his own conduct; but there was a mild yet dignified propriety in all she said or did, which rendered the attempt futile. Irritable and perverse to every one else, she was the only object in his household that escaped the direct ebullitions of his ill-humour. The perfections of her character were, however, a tacit reproach to his own guilty propensities, and excited the most unamiable feelings of his nature. Tho' constrained to treat her with outward respect, he endeavoured on every occasion

to wound her feelings with the most cutting irony: but, guarded by the triple shield of self-command, his darts fell harmless, or at least she had the fortitude to conceal the wounds that rankled deep in her heart.

About this period aunt Janet began rapidly to decline. She had daily become more and more attached to her niece. They had now one feeling in common betwixt them, for when the youthful mother, after noticing some indication of intelligence or appearance of increasing strength in her little William, raised her moistened eyes to those of her aged companion, she read in them a corresponding expression of pleasure. This was the more gratifying to her feelings, since it was one of sir Simon's modes of tormenting his ill-fated wife to make the feeble infant an object of his sarcasms.

Lady Frazer watched over her with the tenderness of a child. She soothed, as much as lay in her power, the little asperities

asperities of her temper, which were called forth by the indifference and neglect of a nephew, whom from infancy she had cherished as a son. From her ill-timed and indiscriminate indulgence had indeed proceeded, in a great measure, the faults of his character, but still her matchless, though mistaken affection, required from him a far different return.

After a confinement of three weeks to her bed, she one morning requested to see sir Simon alone; of the nature of their long conference, for he remained with her two hours, Marion was ignorant, but from the altered manners of the baronet towards herself, she conjectured that his aunt had enlisted his self-interest on her side, as from this moment he behaved to her with greater respect than he had lately done.

Freed from the annoying sarcasms of her husband, lady Frazer's days glided on in dull uniformity. Her brother's liberality had rendered her independent

of the baronet in pecuniary matters, and as she had few personal wants to gratify, she had cherished many a pleasing scheme for employing her superfluous wealth in promoting industry and diffusing comfort around her.

But these praiseworthy intentions were frustrated by the authority of sir Simon, whose narrow and tyrannical soul preferred domineering over a parcel of ignorant slaves, rather than being the landlord of a free and happy peasantry.

The disappointment of this her favourite project was the more galling, when she witnessed what had been done by captain Frazer with his very limited means. From a bleak and barren heath, his few paternal acres had been converted into corn-fields and luxuriant pastures—not by displacing the old occupants of the soil, and substituting in the room of whole families, thus doomed to wretchedness, or to seek subsistence in a foreign land, a rapacious store-master,

ter, in order to obtain a sudden augmentation of rent, but by securing to his tenants the lands they possessed on moderate terms, by rewarding superior industry, and fostering among the young a spirit of improvement.

The cottages were repaired, or rather rebuilt, and exhibited an air of comfort and cleanliness seldom to be found in a Highland hut. One of these little buildings, with a small garden, and half an acre of land, was appropriated to a schoolmaster, who, in consideration of this accommodation (rent-free), agreed to instruct the children on the estate at a very moderate rate.

Every measure that degraded the peasant to the pauper, or loosened the bands of affection between parents and children, founded on a series of benefits conferred and received, was deemed, by the inhabitants of Fairy Cottage, highly injurious to the morals of any class of men. Hence charity schools, or free schools, as

they are sometimes denominated, of every description, fell under their decided reprobation.

The small pittance which the parent lays up with pleasure to remunerate the instructor of his children, when carried at the end of each week or month, by the little urchins, to their master, gives them a feeling of independence and self-respect which will in vain be looked for in a child who, from earliest infancy, has exhibited the badge of pauperism in his cap, or dangling from his button-hole. It besides generates a degree of kindness between the parents and schoolmaster, highly favourable to the pupils. Cold indeed must be that heart which, returning from the abode of honest industry, where the snow-white napkin has been drawn from the gudewife's press, and "the well-hained kebbuck" placed on the board for his entertainment, does not feel a greater interest in the improvement of their offspring, than he who receives

ceives from the hands of a parish officer, or the secretary of some charitable society, a certain sum per head for a mob of boys and girls, with whose connexions he is unacquainted, and to whose welfare he must be in a great measure indifferent, except in so far as to prepare them to repeat by rote orthodox creeds and loyal dogmata, for an yearly exhibition before their royal or lordly patrons and lady-patronesses.

While captain Frazer was contending with long-established usages and inveterate prejudices, and imperceptibly introducing, among his few tenants, improved agricultural instruments, and a more advantageous mode of culture, his Emily took upon herself the instruction of the young maidens in the management of the dairy, and other departments of rural economy which fell more immediately under female superintendence. With this view she received them in turns to assist her dairy-maid; and in a short time the but-

ter and cheese made on their little farms "bore the vogue at market, tron, or fair."

At Midsummer, a rural festival was held at Fairy Cottage. In the morning, specimens of domestic industry were exhibited by the females, such as linen cloth, stuffs, and home-made tartans; while the children vied with each other in displaying their industry in stocking-working, sewing, &c.

No premiums were distributed, for Mrs. Frazer considered the stimulus thus imparted to emulation of very doubtful utility, and only calculated to create ill-will among the competitors.

While this scene was going on within doors, captain Frazer, accompanied by one or two of his eldest tenants, inspected the agricultural operations on the different farms, and explained to them the improvements carrying on in that he retained in his own hand.

In his intercourse with his tenants, he was never imperative: if he wished any new

new method introduced among them, he stated the advantages which he understood had followed its adoption in other districts, and regretted that his own limited farm did not enable him to give it a fair trial. In this way he excited in their minds a love of experiment; and many an improvement was thus introduced among them, which long-cherished prejudices would have at once rejected, had it been directly proposed for their adoption.

A plain substantial repast was spread in the barn, which was "swept and garnished for the occasion," and the evening concluded with a dance, in which Malcolm and his Emily joined, with a lightness of heart seldom experienced in the crowded ball-room.

Lady Frazer had promised this year to attend the summer festival at the Cottage, but the illness of aunt Janet made her relinquish the idea. With an urbanity, however, which Marion had

deemed foreign to her nature, the invalid insisted that she should fulfil her engagement, as she found herself considerably relieved from some of her most painful symptoms.

Thus urged, her ladyship set off on her little journey, and reached the Cottage just in time to be present at the morning exhibition. It was a scene well calculated to impart pleasure to the unsophisticated mind of Marion. Her presence at first threw a restraint over the meeting, but her winning attentions to the old, and her playful notice of the young, soon set them at their ease.

She joined in the repast and the dance with something like the hilarity of her early days.—"How happy," she said, "would my brother have been to witness a spectacle like this!—how delighted he always is to behold happy faces!—When I visit Glencross Cottage, I shall establish a similar festival," she whispered to Mrs. Frazer, as she took a seat

seat by her side, after having fatigued herself with dancing.

The animation which sparkled in her eyes, and diffused a peculiar charm over her countenance, was, however, momentary; her own wayward fate pressed upon her recollection, and a tear of bitterness dimmed the lustre of her eye. Emily saw and pitied her sorrows, and exerted all her powers to chase them from her heart. They soon retired from the festive scene, and spent the evening in quiet and unrestrained converse.

Lady Frazer shared the bed of the little Emily. Painful dreams rendered her repose unrefreshing, and on the following morning she appeared so unwell, that her hostess pressed her to remain till the next day. But Marion refused the pressing invitation, on account of the illness of her aunt and the absence of sir Simon. Captain Malcolm and his lady therefore prepared to accompany her home; and she had reason to rejoice

in their attentive kindness, for a scene awaited her there which is always afflicting to the feeling heart.

Aunt Janet had been re-attacked with every dangerous symptom during the night, and had expressed great anxiety for the return of her niece. Lady Frazer immediately repaired to her chamber. At sight of her, a smile played on the withered and harsh features of the invalid, which the approach of death had rendered ghastly. She took her hand as she leant over her, and pressed it to her parched lips. In a broken and interrupted voice, she thanked her for her forbearance and kindness, which she acknowledged she had not deserved. She placed in her hand a packet of papers, which she desired her not to peruse till after her death, and then uttering a fervent blessing on her and the infant William, she sunk back on her pillow and expired.

The prosperous and the happy would smile

smile were I to describe the feelings of lady Frazer at this moment: but who that has not mourned over the deprivation of every cherished hope can know the melancholy value which circumstances may give to the most insignificant of created beings? Unblessed with the affection of her husband—left in the summer of her days to mourn over the estrangement of the being to whom she had resigned her youthful heart—deprived of the dear friend of her youth, and removed to a distance from the endearments of fraternal affection, she stood like a blasted tree amidst a dreary desert, the sport of every passing blast.

Mrs. Frazer understood and pitied her sorrow; she gently drew her from the chamber of death, and endeavoured to steal her mind from the gloom that threatened to overwhelm it. Nor was she wholly unsuccessful; a pleasing, though pensive serenity, gradually diffused

fused itself over her soul, and chased from her countenance the melancholy expression which had given so much pain to her compasionate friends.

Captain Frazer departed after dinner, leaving his Emily to cheer the solitude of the fair mourner until the return of her husband, which they supposed would not be delayed when he learned the death of his aunt.

Lady Frazer, as soon as her agitation would permit, wrote to inform him of the event, and dispatched a messenger with the letter to the house of his friend, where he had been on a visit for some days. Towards the evening of the second day from that on which he set out, the servant returned, bringing a cold laconic note to his lady from the baronet, simply saying, that a cold, caught in following the chace, prevented him travelling for a day or two, but that he had sent orders to Bruce to provide every thing

thing proper on the occasion, and that he trusted he would be so far recovered as to return in time for the funeral.

Marion stifled, in the presence of her friend, the grief she felt on the perusal of this letter. Her love for the baronet, it is true, had fled away like a dream; yet when the recollection of it arose to her fancy, she sighed to think how illusory had proved all her hopes of happiness, and fled to her chamber to weep in solitude over her blighted prospects.

Soon, however, she reproached herself for this weakness, and in order to recover her composure, she bent her steps towards the shrubbery. As she wandered, however, through this blooming wilderness, reared by the hand of friendship, a feeling of deep humiliation pervaded her mind, when she reflected that her vaunted beauty and talents had only subjected her to a gross and degrading passion, instead of attracting the tender homage of the heart.

From

From a reflection so painful she flew for refuge to the conversation of Emily; but as she opened the parlour-door, sorrow and care were for a while forgotten in the embrace of her brother.

Two days only could he give to the enjoyment of his sister's company, since his duty, as deputy king's advocate on the northern circuit, obliged him to meet the judges at Inverness at the end of that time, and also to attend them in their progress southward. Fain would he have persuaded Marion and Mrs. Frazer to accompany him to Inverness, to join in the festivities which always take place in compliment to the judges during the different circuits; and as an inducement to the former to accord with his wishes, he informed her that the worthy sage, who was that year to preside on the bench, had not forgotten his favourite little maid of Glencross Cottage.

Lady Frazer, however, who in proportion to the unkindness of her husband, was

was scrupulous to regulate her own conduct by the strictest rules of propriety, informed her brother of the melancholy catastrophe which had occurred in her family, and which offered an unanswerable objection to his proposal.

Though he regretted the deprivation of their company, he was compelled to admit that the excuse was but too valid. "Poor aunt Janet!" he added; "she was, by all accounts, a plague to herself and others during her life, and has, doubtless, left no one to shed a tear over her grave."

"Not so, my dear brother," replied Marion, while tears of sincere regret rolled down her cheeks: "to me she has always been the kindest and most sympathizing of friends, and in losing her I have lost the only consolation my solitary state afforded."

"Out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh;" and Marion was not aware of the inference which might be drawn from these words. She arose and left

left the room to recover from her agitation, leaving the worthy advocate dumb with astonishment.

The words of little Bouverie, when he was last in the north, flashed on his recollection, and crimsoned his manly countenance with indignation. He took the hand of Mrs. Frazer—"Excuse, my dear madam," he said, "the freedom of which I am about to be guilty; but tell me, I conjure you, whether my sister meets with that kindness and respect from her husband which her virtues and amiable qualities so well deserve? Should the being she has chosen for a protector neglect or abuse his trust, a brother's arm may find a way to punish——"

"Stop, my good sir!" said his alarmed auditress; "you have intruded on hallowed ground. If lady Frazer has any causes of domestic dissatisfaction, the remedy may safely be trusted to her own prudence and discretion, of which no one with whom I am acquainted possesses

possesses a greater share. With my goodman, I have often, it is true, regretted that your sister should have linked her fate with one so far her inferior in every mental attainment; but that inferiority," she added, with an arch smile, "is surely no legitimate subject for chastisement? That my friend would have been happier with a husband whose congenial mind would have fitted him for a sharer in her studies and amusements, I am willing to grant; but it appears to me that sir Simon might as justly complain of her ladyship's dislike to the chace, as that he should be blamed for not relishing the philosophy of Stewart, or the flowing numbers of Moore. That your sister's happiness is your aim I cannot doubt; but rest assured, her greatest enemy could not blast it more effectually than would her affectionate brother, were he in any manner of way to interfere between her and her husband.

husband. Besides, what reason have you to infer that the baronet has failed in affection to his wife? Not, I hope, from the few casual expressions of grief for her aunt's loss that just now fell from her lips? Had you beheld her, as I did, at Fairy Cottage, on Monday last, joining in our rustic sports with the glee and animation of an Euphrosyne, very different would have been your conclusion. Yesterday she returned hither to witness the last moments of her aged relative—a relative whose prejudices against a Lowland niece her patient sweetness had conquered, and who, for some time past, idolized her as a being of a superior nature. The gloom of the chamber of death was heightened tenfold by its contrast with the mirthful scene she had just quitted, and her weakened spirits were ill calculated to hear aunt Janet mentioned as an encumbrance happily got rid of. Pray, my good friend, be ruled

ruled by me, and do not even glance, in lady Frazer's presence, at a subject so painful to the mind of a delicate woman."

"You are right, my dear friend: my impetuosity would have hurried me headlong to plant a thorn in her gentle bosom, which I would, if possible, shield from every pang. Nor, if you knew my sister as well as I do, Mrs. Frazer, would you wonder at my sensibility respecting every thing connected with her happiness."

"I know her to be possessed of every virtue which can dignify and adorn the female character," rejoined the lady, with all the warmth of her nature, as the object of their conversation entered the room.

Marion held in her hand a paper, which she delivered to her brother with a smile, saying—"This will afford you a proof of the friendship which had grown up between myself and my departed aunt."

It

It was a copy of her will, in which she had bequeathed the whole of her fortune, amounting to three thousand pounds, to lady Frazer, for her sole and separate use, only burdened with a legacy of twenty pounds to Maud Johnstone, and one hundred pounds to Mrs. Frazer, as a mark of respect for the friendship that lady bore to her dear niece, as she had caused it to be expressed.

Mr. Ferguson was affected by this testimony of affection towards his sister, and no longer thought her sorrow for the loss of so kind an aunt unnatural.—"But what have you made of the baronet, Marion?" he said, for the first time recollecting that he had not seen him.

"Sir Simon went, about a week ago, on a visit to his friend, Mr. Macdonald," she replied, "where he proposed remaining a month: but I had a letter from him yesterday, in answer to mine intimating our recent loss, informing me that he

he was confined with a severe cold, but would make an effort to return before the funeral."

"As we are discussing family affairs, Mrs. Frazer," said the advocate, "permit me to inquire whether you and captain Frazer have come to the resolution to entrust my young favourite, Bouverie, to my care?"

"Most joyfully, my dear sir," she replied, "will we accept your considerate proposal; and I trust the docility and gratitude of our boy will be such as not to cause you to repent of your kind partiality."

The lawyer's portmanteau was now ordered in, and a display made of the multifarious presents with which he had loaded himself. A coral and bells for his infant nephew, and a variety of books for the nursery library at the Cottage, were first inspected. Then came a box of fashionable finery for the ladies; and, last

last of all, a beautiful fowling-piece for captain Frazer.

This piece was certainly intended for sir Simon; but owing to some vague undefined suspicions, which still floated in his brain respecting the baronet's conduct to Marion, Mr. Ferguson could not, at the moment, prevail on himself to offer to his acceptance this gift of amity.

The little nursling now made his appearance, and was fondled by his worthy uncle with the tenderest affection.

With a cheerfulness chastened by their vicinity to the chamber of death, was the day spent by our trio. The next morning brought captain Frazer to the Castle, to inquire after the health of the ladies; and we need scarcely add, that the gentlemen met with increased esteem and respect for each other.

Next morning, just as Mr. Ferguson, who proposed to take Fairy Cottage in his way to Inverness, was about to set out

out with captain Frazer, sir Simon arrived. A more than ordinary gloom lowered on his visage as he entered the parlour; but on seeing his brother-in-law, it was instantly changed to the smile of welcome. He expressed himself so disappointed at having been deprived of the pleasure of Mr. Ferguson's company, and was so earnest that the gentlemen would stay and partake of an early dinner, that they at last consented. Yet a certain degree of restraint subsisted between the brothers. Mr. Ferguson appeared to have a kind of intuitive perception of the dark side of the baronet's character, while he in his turn shrunk with instinctive awe from the keen sagacity and undeviating honour of the worthy advocate.

As the baronet's presence rendered her society less necessary to her friend, or, more properly speaking, as she was aware that her company was rather tolerated by him, in compliance with Marion's wishes,

than desired on her own account, Mrs. Frazer departed with the gentlemen, having first promised to lady Frazer, that she would return with the captain on the day that was to consign their departed relative to the tomb.

As the last tread of their horses' feet died on her ear, Marion re-entered the parlour, sad and sorrowful. Sir Simon had relapsed into the state of gloomy abstraction from which the presence of her brother had aroused him in the morning. Her ladyship, with much sweetness, made several attempts at conversation, but finding all her efforts unsuccessful to draw him out of his reverie, she desisted; and taking up a volume of the Mirror, just then published, and which had been presented to her by her brother, she endeavoured to lose a sense of her misfortunes in sympathy for the fictitious sorrows of Venoni.

Tea was brought in at rather an earlier hour than usual; and, after the ser-

vant

vant had withdrawn, sir Simon abruptly inquired, in a voice whose tones grated harshly on the ears of his afflicted wife, whether his aunt had held any particular conversation with her before death?

"Alas, no!" replied Marion: "persuaded, nay, I may say, compelled, by her earnest entreaties, to attend Mrs. Frazer's festival, as had been before agreed on, I only returned in time to receive her last blessing. The will she has left behind, bequeathing to me her whole fortune, is peculiarly gratifying to my feelings, as a testimony of her approbation and affection; but having no desire to accumulate personal property independent of my husband and family, I must entreat you, sir Simon," she continued, with a deep sigh, "to dispose of it in any way you may think proper."

The face of the baronet cleared up at what he deemed her inconsiderate offer to resign thousands; but he well knew that the law would confirm to him no

such right from her mere verbal concession. He therefore adroitly replied, that glad as he would be to save her ladyship the trouble of managing her pecuniary concerns, he could not do so without a written power to that effect.

Marion understood the mean duplicity of the proposition, and contempt for once getting the better of her prudence, she replied—" I shall also thank you, then, sir Simon, to cause such an instrument to be got ready for my signature, and also to include in it the last gift of my dear Helen, since it appears, from what you have just now said, that hitherto you have had no legal right to the appropriation of her property."

If revenge had been Marion's wish, it would now have been completely gratified. Rage convulsed the baronet's lips while she spoke, and his eyes flamed with a lurid glare—his knees smote each other, and the cold drops of perspiration stood on his forehead. His desires all

centered

centered in this world's wealth, and, to accumulate property, which to him was useless, he had suppressed his sister's bequest to her friend, on the supposition that her ladyship was unacquainted with it. Now, when he found his mistake—now, when he stood detected of conduct the most dishonourable, he cursed his own folly, and would gladly have renounced the glittering bait that placed him in a situation so degrading.

Lady Frazer saw and pitied the agony she had caused, and after hearing him stammer out some evasive explanation, arose and left the room.

"If such be the retribution which treads close on the heels of crime," thought her ladyship, as she sought the solitude of her own dressing-room, "there was no occasion to invent a hell for the future punishment of the guilty."

"Dost thou well to be angry?" was a question which, with all her noble indignation against human vice and human

folly, Marion durst scarcely answer to her own mind in the affirmative, as she calmly reviewed her late conduct. Yet abject must be that spirit which could remain unmoved at such paltry duplicity as sir Simon had exerted to secure the property of his sister.

It was not the love of wealth that stirred up the angry passions in her ladyship's mind; it was the mortification of being connected with a man so lost to every feeling of honour—it was the grief of being robbed of the last testimony of the attachment of her departed friend, that rankled in the bosom of the gentlest of her sex.

Amidst all her own causes of sorrow, Helen Frazer ceased not to commiserate the fate of her friend. Joined to a man who seemed totally insensible to her value, she even anticipated a period when her chains would become so galling that she might wish to dissever them, and, in so far as fortune was concerned, she was anxious

anxious to render Marion independent of the baronet.

Delicacy, however, and the agony which lady Frazer always evinced at the most distant allusion to their separation, restrained her from mentioning her intention. At her death, therefore, the will fell into the hands of her brother, who, in spite of the remonstrances of aunt Janet, determined to conceal the bequest.

This, it is highly probable, would never have reached the ears of her ladyship, had not her aged relative, in a letter in which she enclosed a copy of her own settlement, informed her of the circumstance.

Marion determined to confine the knowledge she had thus obtained to her own bosom, and also to give up to sir Simon his aunt's bequest, as she foresaw it would be to him a perpetual source of dissatisfaction. But when, under the pretence of saving her trouble, he eagerly grasped at obtaining a legal claim

upon the property, the indignation she felt at such mean duplicity overcame her resolves, and produced the keen, but well-deserved reproof, which stung the guilty soul of the baronet.

Lady Frazer had no sooner departed, than starting from his chair, sir Simon paced the room in extreme perturbation. —" Dearly shalt thou repent this insult!" he muttered: but again, when he thought of the sweetness of temper and the patient forbearance of Marion, he began to conceive that no affront was intended, but that she simply meant what she had expressed.

However that might be, the baronet was aware that it was not his interest to provoke her to claim the protection of her brother, since ultimately the lawyer's immense fortune would centre in her. Determined, therefore, to repair his error by every conciliating means in his power, he waited in sullen anxiety for her ladyship's return.

An

An hour passed in the nursery had harmonized her feelings, and the action which had at first roused her resentment was now only thought of with sentiments of pity.

In this frame of mind she joined her husband, who shrunk from the silent upbraiding of her eye; but, as she immediately began to talk on indifferent subjects, the sense of his own demerit quickly vanished from his mind.

Before the arrival of her friends, the following morning, from Fairy Cottage, lady Frazer inquired of sir Simon if the deed had been prepared which was to restore to him the property of his relatives? To which he carelessly replied, that he had named it to Bruce, but could not inform her whether it had been completed.

The steward entering at this moment, the question was put to him, and the deed produced in answer.

Her ladyship run it over, but paused

before affixing to it her signature.—"There is, I think, no time specified in your aunt's will for the payment of the legacy to my friend, or that to her late attendant," she said, turning to the baronet; "but, before I relinquish my claim upon the property, I must stipulate with you to place the amount of these sums in my possession."

Sir Simon, who had regarded the pause as ominous of a refusal, immediately ordered Bruce to give the money to her ladyship, at the same time secretly execrating the imbecility of the old woman, for what his avaricious soul deemed her foolish liberality.

The same evening beheld the remains of Miss Janet Frazer consigned to the tomb of her ancestors; and bitter were the tears which her youthful niece shed over her grave.

Leaning on the arm of captain Frazer, she returned to the Castle, oppressed with a sense of desolateness which can scarcely

scarcely be conceived by the prosperous or the happy.

Mrs. Frazer saw and pitied the feelings of her friend; and proceeding to the nursery, she took the infant William from his nurse, and, returning to the parlour, placed him in silence in the arms of his disconsolate mother.

Marion rewarded her friend with one of her sweetest smiles, and pressing the feeble babe to her throbbing heart, confessed that one tie still remained to bind her to existence.

CHAPTER III.

"Nae langer she grat; her tears were a' spent;
Despair it was come, and she thought it content;
She thought it content, but her cheek it grew pale,
And she looked like a snowdrop, broke down by the hail."

THREE years had passed away in the same cheerless unbroken monotony at Castle Frazer, except by an occasional intercourse with the worthy inhabitants of Fairy Cottage, and an annual visit from Mr. Ferguson.

Marion could not be termed positively miserable; yet the temper of her mind was still further removed from happiness. Her mind became daily more enriched by study; but, alas! she had no domestic companion to assist in her pursuits, or sympathize in her progress.

gress. The smiles of her little William beguiled many a solitary hour; but his fragile form and weakly constitution reminded her continually of the very uncertain tenure on which he held existence.

Sir Simon was by turns gloomy and irritable. Every attempt to sooth his feelings produced a contrary effect, and he flew to intoxication, or the chace, as a relief from the whisperings of his conscience.

Her friends at the Cottage beheld with deep commiseration the alteration which a few short years had effected in lady Frazer's appearance. The playful smile which used to adorn her face had given place to a look of hopeless dejection. At times reading even ceased to afford its accustomed solace; for hours would her ladyship sit and brood over her withered hopes; frequently she even now contemplated the happiness of Malcolm and his Emily with a joyless heart, since it

it threw a deeper shade over her own unhappy destiny.

With the eagerness of one who "seeketh relief, and findeth none," she looked forward to her brother's visits, as the benighted traveller watches for the rising moon to light him on his weary way. But even the pure delight of fraternal intercourse was embittered by the restraint Marion imposed on herself, in order to veil from the jealous and watchful tenderness of Mr. Ferguson her conjugal unhappiness.

Often was she tempted, when smarting under the pangs of neglect and disappointed affection, to impart to him the causes of her sorrow, and claim the protection of his roof; but aware that, if even sir Simon would consent to this arrangement, he had the power, and, she doubted not, the will to retain her infant son.

To leave her child to the care of such a father was an idea too painful to support,

port, and she heroically determined to endure every species of neglect and indignity, rather than relinquish the sacred trust.

It was on his return from the north, about this period, that Mr. Ferguson rescued the little Mary from the fangs of her merciless nurse. He wrote an account of his adventure to his beloved sister, who felt herself warmly interested in the fate of the innocent sufferer.

At this time also Mrs. Frazer presented her husband with another pledge of her love; and, in the increased happiness of her friends, lady Frazer endeavoured for a while to forget her own sorrows.

In due time the infant stranger received the name of Marion, and lady Frazer mentally vowed that, through life, her name-daughter should, equally with her own William, share her maternal tenderness.

Towards the end of the present year

sir

sir Simon received a letter from his uncle, lord William Frazer, requesting that Mr. M'Gregor might be permitted to resign his charge in favour of William Glen. As a reason for this request, he stated, that increasing dejection of mind made him anxious to secure the sympathizing consolations of friendship, and, with this view, he had prevailed on the reverend gentleman to become an inmate of his mansion.

In recommending Mr. Glen as his successor, he considered that he was not only performing a simple act of justice to the youth himself, who would, in consequence of the promise of the late sir William Frazer, have become the pastor of Frazerburg at his father's death, had his education been completed, but also that he was thus securing an acceptable and worthy minister to the parish, in the son of their late respected incumbent.

The baronet felt some undefined foreboding

boding of evil on the perusal of this letter, but as his uncle had immense unentailed wealth to dispose of, a request from him could not be denied.

The name of William Glen also grated painfully on his ears; but he could frame no reasonable objections to his appointment.

Unacquainted himself with any tie but that of self-interest, he concluded, besides, that it was the most effectual method of insuring his silence in regard to Bertha Campbell's wrongs. Little was he acquainted with the honourable principles or delicate feelings of this worthy young man, or he might have known that with him it was a sacred subject, buried deep in the inmost recesses of his heart.

An acquiescence with the request of his uncle was accordingly dispatched; Mr. M'Gregor gave in his resignation to the presbytery, and sir Simon, as patron,

tron, forwarded the presentation to Mr. Glen.

On the following Sabbath the youthful divine ascended the pulpit of his deceased father, with feelings not to be described. His frame shook with agony as he glanced his eye towards the pew where, radiant in youth and innocence, sat his beloved Bertha, when he had last been a worshipper in this sacred fane.

His father, too, had then stood in the place he now filled. He looked towards his widowed mother—her eye was fixed upon him, and recalled him to a sense of the impropriety of his conduct.

He arose, and, in tremulous accents, read a portion of a psalm, and again sitting down, covered his face with his hand, and groaned audibly. The precentor, "in humble guise," raised the "noble Elgin, chief of Scotia's holy lays," and was soon joined by the congregation,

tion, with a fervour and devotion seldom to be met with in more polished audiences, where "Italian trills may please the tickled ear, but have nought in unison with our Creator's praise."

While he joined in this simple act of devotion, his mind became elevated to that heaven where, he trusted, his lost Bertha, purified by suffering, was enjoying the full fruition of bliss.

As the strains ceased, he once more arose. Every trace of his former weakness had disappeared. In humble, but energetic language, he petitioned the Almighty Ruler of the universe in behalf of himself and his hearers; that the hearts of the rich might not be dazzled by prosperity, nor hardened by vanity; that the poor might be sober, industrious, and contented, and that they might all consider themselves as fellow-pilgrims proceeding to that land where sin and sorrow find no entrance.

After an appropriate and eloquent discourse,

course, Mr. Glen met the session which had been assembled on the occasion. He laid before it the presentation he had received, but at the same time declared, that unless he was approved of by a large majority of the parishioners, he would decline becoming their pastor, since, without entering upon the disputed right of patronage, he was clearly of opinion that his ministry could be of no avail, if he entered not by the door, but broke into the fold like a thief and a robber.

The call was moderated on the following Tuesday, and signed, not by a large majority, but by the whole of the parishioners, every one of whom was more eager than another to offer this mark of respect to their young favourite.

Mr. M'Gregor only waited to introduce their new minister, and then departed for lord William Fraser's residence in Edinburgh, where he was anxiously expected. He had visited that nobleman

nobleman immediately on the death of his niece, Miss Helen Frazer, in compliance with her last solemn injunction, at which period he found him overwhelmed with affliction for the loss of his beloved Charles.

The communication which he then made to him, in conformity with her dying wishes, aroused the sorrowing parent from the stupor of grief into which he had fallen: but disappointment having attended all his attempts to investigate the mystery which hung over the last days of his lamented boy, he became anxious to secure the aid and advice of a faithful friend. With this view he entreated Mr. M'Gregor to take up his future abode in his family; and lady Frazer, pitying the anxiety of the wretched parent, added her persuasions to those of his lordship, and both united obtained the worthy pastor's compliance with their wishes.

The most needy spendthrift could not have

have watched more anxiously the sick-bed of a relative whose death was to re-instate him in wealth and consequence, than did sir Simon the declining health of his worthy uncle. He anticipated, not only without a feeling of regret, but with secret joy, the stroke that, in depriving the world of one of its brightest ornaments, would augment, nay, more than double his already-immense fortune. He kept a spy in the household of his relative, and from him he heard, from time to time, with manifest chagrin, that lord William was gradually recovering from the shock of his son's death.

He heard also, with consternation and dismay, from his unworthy agent, a few months after Mr. M'Gregor had taken up his residence at Edinburgh, that the reverend gentleman had accompanied lord William to the south. They purposed to make a short stay at Carlisle, and afterwards to visit some other places worthy of notice.

Carlisle

Carlisle was the town where captain Frazer's regiment was quartered immediately before embarking for the continent. Could his uncle suspect? Torn with conflicting passions, he resolved to visit Edinburgh in person, and endeavour, by artfully questioning the domestics, if possible, to learn the true motive for this unexpected and strange journey.

Nothing certainly could be more natural than that lord William should endeavour to divert his grief by a change of place and scene; but "conscience makes cowards of us all," and the baronet, not satisfied with this obvious explanation, looked for a hidden and deeper motive for this excursion.

Two days he remained at his uncle's house, under the pretence of having business to transact in town, but in reality with the base design of tampering with the domestics.

But either there was no secret to discover,

cover, or the household were unacquainted with it, for, after the most artful and insidious questions, he was compelled to relinquish the attempt.

It was at this period, before his return to the north, that he broke in on the studies of the worthy advocate at Glencross Cottage.

He was, as already related, in no placid temper of mind during his ride from Edinburgh, but smoothed his ruffled brow on approaching the gate of his brother-in-law.

When he beheld little Mary, however, domesticated at the Cottage, he could scarcely maintain the appearance of good-humour, conceiving she might be a means of diverting a portion of Mr. Ferguson's wealth from himself and his family: but when the infant turned full upon him her lovely countenance, a cold tremor shook his frame, and with difficulty he concealed the tortures which racked his bosom.

One

One night only he spent at the Cottage, and the morning's dawn lighted him on his return to Castle Frazer.

CHAPTER IV.

Hope, that on nature's youth is still attending,
No more to me her siren song shall sing;
Never to *me* her influence extending,
Shall I again enjoy the days of spring.

CHARLOTTE SMITH.

SILENT and gloomy, sir Simon Frazer re-entered the mansion of his fathers. Marion welcomed him back with a sweet but mournful smile, observing, at the same time, that his stay had been much shorter than he intended, and anxiously inquiring after the health of her brother?

"I found this pattern of excellence amusing himself with his base-born brat," he replied, with a smile of sarcastic bitterness, "who will, most probably, rival even you in his affection, and become the

the ultimate possessor of his immense possessions."

Marion's cheeks glowed with indignation at listening to this aspersion against her revered brother, and an angry reply hovered on her lips; but a feeling of contempt checked the rising retort, and she only marked her disapprobation by a look of dignified silence. What eloquence was conveyed in that look!—the eyes of the baronet even shrunk beneath the silent reproof it conveyed.

The topic of his journey was never again reverted to by her, nor the name of his uncle once mentioned. She was aware he had not seen this venerated relative, since, in his absence, she had received a packet from lord William Frazer, from Carlisle, stating the disappointment of his hopes regarding the elucidation of the business which led him to that city, and his design of visiting the British army on the Continent, if possible, before his return to Scotland.

This packet, like many others on the same subject, was forwarded under cover to captain Frazer—doubtless from a distrust of his nephew's honour, although delicacy, and a wish not to wound the already-lacerated feelings of lady Frazer, prevented even the most distant hint being given of the motive for this precaution.

A severe winter confined lady Frazer almost constantly within the walls of her own cheerless mansion, which was now seldom enlivened by the presence of her Cottage friends, owing to the extreme badness of the roads. The only consolation her solitary state afforded was the rapid improvement in the health and growth of her darling William, who now gave promise of attaining maturity, and rewarding the toils of his anxious mother.

In proportion, however, to the amendment of the infant, the decline of her ladyship's health became apparent. After

ter an absence of nearly a month, Mrs. Frazer was appalled at the sight of the alteration which had taken place in the whole appearance of her friend.

An ominous red glowed on her cheeks —her majestic form was bent and attenuated, and a troublesome hollow cough teazed her without intermission. She suffered no pain, nor did the slightest complaint pass her lips. With sir Simon's company she was seldom troubled, as he spent most of his time either in the sports of the field, or at the houses of his different acquaintances. Reading and motion were alike become irksome to her, and the time which she could not dedicate to her infant boy was passed in painful rumination on the past, and forebodings of the destitute state of her little William, when he should be left by her death solely to the care and superintendence of his father.

Mrs. Frazer was not of a temper to sit down and supinely mourn over evils,

while the most distant hope remained of removing them. With the concurrence of her husband, she therefore declared her intention of sending Emily, for a week, to bear her company; but so feeble and depressed was poor Marion, that though grateful for her friend's kind consideration, she felt not the warm pleasure with which such a proposition would have been received a few months before.

Next morning captain Frazer conducted his daughter to the Castle. The soothing attentions of this affectionate and pleasing girl, but especially her attachment to little William, who, in his turn, was delighted with his young and sportive nurse, produced a salutary effect on the care-worn spirits of her ladyship.

Mrs. Frazer's efforts for the recovery of her friend did not, however, terminate here. She wrote confidentially to Mr. Ferguson, imparting to him her fears for his sister's health, and entreating him to visit the north, and, if possible, prevail

on

on her to accompany him back to Edinburgh, where the most able medical advice, aided by his attentive kindness, would, she trusted, ensure her complete recovery.

Mr. Ferguson lost not a moment in availing himself of this friendly communication. He pursued, without delay, his journey to Argyleshire; but, prepared as he was, by Mrs. Frazer's letter, to behold his sister greatly altered, his conceptions fell far short of the torturing reality.

She was reclining on a sofa, as he entered the saloon, unannounced and unperceived, from the noisy mirth of William and Emily, who were sporting beside her on the carpet. A large shawl enveloped her fragile form; one wasted hand supported her head, while with the other she shaded her eyes from the glare of a brilliant wintry sun.

Mr. Ferguson was for a moment rivetted to the spot; but quickly recover-

ing his self-possession, he was about to retreat, and send in a servant to prepare her for his appearance, when his little nephew clung to his pretty nurse, and began to cry at the sight of a stranger.

Marion raised herself up, and giving a cry of delighted surprise on beholding her brother, flew to embrace him; but the exertion was too much for her enfeebled frame, and she fainted in his arms.

On being restored to animation, she expressed, in the liveliest terms, the happiness his unexpected arrival had given her; and, during the rest of the day, appeared so cheerful and animated, that the fears of her affectionate brother began to subside.

They spent the day alone, and retired early to rest, as Mr. Ferguson was fatigued with his journey. On the following morning, however, all his terrors returned, as he gazed on the wan visage of his beloved sister.

Understanding

Understanding that sir Simon had been from home for some time, on a visit to a friend about ten miles distant, and was not expected to return for several days, he mentally reprobated his unfeeling conduct in leaving his young and amiable wife, in her declining state of health, without a friend to cheer her solitary hours.

He was delighted with the affectionate attentions of Emily Frazer to his sister, and with the improvement which was evident in his infant nephew, who promised at last to become a fine healthy boy.

For lady Frazer's deserted state, no one felt more commiseration than the youthful pastor of Frazerburgh, for no one was more thoroughly acquainted with the turpitude of sir Simon's character. Himself a deep and lasting sufferer by the base and dishonourable conduct of the baronet, he was drawn towards his

unhappy lady by the strong bond of mutual injuries.

Marion had often shed a tear over the wrongs of Bertha Campbell, when conversing with Mr. Glen on her appearance in the Vale of Kinglass; but not a syllable had ever dropped from his lips, which could lead to a knowledge of her seducer.

On the day succeeding that on which Mr. Ferguson arrived at the Castle, Mr. Glen called, as was his frequent custom, to inquire after the health of lady Frazer, and was by her introduced to her brother.

Mr. Ferguson was much pleased by the modest unassuming manners of the young divine, and greatly interested by the melancholy visible in his voice and countenance.

He was pressed to stay dinner, and a servant sent to the village to inform Mrs. Glen of the arrangement. If the worthy

worthy lawyer had been pleased with his manners and appearance, he was now charmed with the extent of his information, and the solid learning he possessed. He regretted that talents such as his should be buried in an obscure Highland village, and resolved, if an opportunity offered, to transplant him to a more congenial soil.

After Mr. Glen's departure, Marion related to her brother the story of his unfortunate attachment, and Bertha's wrongs.

He listened with much interest to the simple tale, and, before his sister concluded, was at no loss to guess who had been the agent in her ruin. His dislike to the baronet was greatly heightened by this dishonourable affair; but he suppressed his strong indignation on his sister's account, and only thought how he could best free her from the galling yoke, which he was convinced bore heavy on

her gentle spirit, and was fast hastening her to an early grave.

The next day Mr. Ferguson declared his intention of riding over to Fairy Cottage to embrace his adopted boy, and with this view mounted his horse immediately after breakfast.

Marion's eyes watched the receding form of her brother, as he slowly winded down the path leading from the house, and then returned to the breakfast-parlour, sad and solitary.

She was aware propriety demanded that sir Simon should be informed of the arrival of her unexpected guest, yet she was loath to cloud the few happy moments her brother's society afforded her, by the restraint which the presence of the baronet always imposed. Anxious, however, to remain free from reproach, even in trifles, she dispatched a note to her husband, but was not disappointed to learn, on the return of the servant, that

that sir Simon was gone on a round of visits, with his friend, and that they were not expected back for a few days.

The information which the worthy inmates of the Cottage thought it their duty no longer to withhold, since they beheld lady Frazer fast sinking under neglect and disappointed affection, rendered Mr. Ferguson, if possible, more anxious than before to remove her to Edinburgh. He was therefore disappointed, on returning to the Castle, to hear of sir Simon's protracted absence. He was forced, however, to restrain his impatience, as a whole week elapsed before the baronet's return.

The hypocritical joy he expressed at the unexpected happiness of seeing his brother-in-law, and his sorrow at having been so long absent after his arrival, was listened to with ill-concealed impatience by the open-hearted advocate; and, but for his sister's sake, he would have withheld the hand of fellowship from a man

he

he so thoroughly despised. Checking his indignation, however, he entered on the subject of his sister's removal to Edinburgh, for the sake of medical advice, and entreated sir Simon to use his influence with her to set out immediately, as her wasted form and incessant cough, in his apprehension, rendered the danger imminent.

The baronet regarded Mr. Ferguson like one awakened from a dream; so unobservant and careless had he been, that the dangerous state of Marion's health, which for months had been evident to all besides, had totally escaped his notice.

A momentary feeling of remorse struck his obdurate heart, as he reflected on the patient uncomplaining sweetness of the being whose happiness he had destroyed —nay, whose days he had perhaps shortened by unkindness and neglect. The feeling was, however, evanescent, for sir Simon possessed, in an eminent degree, the faculty of transferring to others the blame

blame justly due to his own guilty actions.

"If Marion be as ill as your brotherly fears represent," he replied, "I have reason to be offended at having been kept so long in ignorance of it, or of her wish to visit the south. I had flattered myself that her pale cheeks proceeded from a different and far more pleasing cause. As it is, however, lady Frazer's wishes shall be complied with; I shall immediately order an establishment to be formed in Edinburgh, conformable to the rank which your sister and my wife ought to hold in society."

"Hold, sir Simon," rejoined the lawyer, with a look that convinced the baronet he had gone too far: "my visit to Castle Frazer was unexpected by my sister, nor have I had the inhumanity to hint to her my fears of a danger to which she seems wholly insensible. Besides, so rigid is her sense of duty, I was fully persuaded that no entreaties on my part

part would induce her to resolve on this journey without your fullest approbation; I therefore deferred mentioning the subject until your return. If poor Marion can yet be saved, it must be by the soothing and watchful cares of affection. To talk of forming a splendid establishment for one who in all probability is fast hastening to the grave, is a cruel mockery of her feeble condition."

The subject of their conversation now entered the apartment. Sir Simon's eye glanced for a moment at her altered appearance, and he soon became convinced that her brother's fears were well-founded. He took her hand, and, in a voice tremulous from emotion, inquired after her health.

Marion's weakened spirits were not proof against his returning tenderness, and she burst into tears.

"You are ill, my love," he said: "we must have more able advice than this wild nook affords. We will accompany your

your brother on his return to Edinburgh."

Lady Frazer shook her head with a mournful smile, but remained silent, and nothing more was said at the time. After dinner, however, the subject was resumed by her brother, who so heartily urged the plan, that Marion was left no plea for farther refusal, except her firm determination never to abandon William to the care of hirelings.

This last objection was also obviated, by her brother declaring that the little urchin should accompany them—"And," he added, while a smile of intelligence passed between him and Emily Frazer, "to complete my nursery establishment, I mean to enlist his head-nurse in our party."

"On one principle alone," said Marion, turning to sir Simon, "will I consent for a while to leave this retreat. I am aware how much of your happiness depends on the sports of the field, and the

the company of your brother sportsmen; remain, therefore, at Castle Frazer for the present: should my malady increase, you shall speedily be informed of the circumstance. It would render me wretched, were I in any manner of way to interfere with your pleasures."

The baronet framed his tongue to utter a negative to her wishes, though he secretly rejoiced to find, in the obstinacy with which she insisted on this condition, an excuse for pursuing his own inclinations.

It was finally settled that in two days the party should set out on their journey.

Mournful was the parting between Marion and Emily. The invalid pressed Mrs. Frazer to her throbbing heart, thanked her for her unwearied kindness, and entreated, that should they never again meet, she would be a mother to her William.

Unable to sleep, on the morning of their departure, Marion arose at an early hour.

hour. The prospect without was cold and desolate as her own heart. The sun had not yet dissipated the mist which enveloped the mountains, and floated on the valleys beneath. She entered the chamber of her departed sister; it was like taking a last farewell of a beloved friend. All she had enjoyed and suffered since first they met rushed on her imagination like an overwhelming torrent, and subdued her fortitude.

She seated herself on the bed, and gave free vent to her tears.—"Ah! my beloved Helen!" she exclaimed, "why did I not follow you to the peaceful grave? that last dismal mansion of mortality has no terrors for the wretched!"

The kindness of aunt Janet next passed in review before her mental vision. She had been able to attach all hearts but one, and her tears redoubled when the neglect and ingratitude of her husband's conduct recurred to her mind. But her sorrow was mingled with a sense of

of injury, which tended to restore her fortitude; and, shaking off the oppression which weighed heavy on her heart, she prepared to meet her assembled friends in the breakfast-room.

CHAP-

CHAPTER V.

Ah! hills beloved! where once a happy child,
Your beechen shades, your turf, your flowers among,
I wove your bluebells into garlands wild,
And woke your echoes with my rural song!

Ah! hills beloved! your turf, your flowers remain;
But can they peace to this sad breast restore;
For one poor moment sooth the sense of pain,
And teach a breaking heart to throb no more?

CHARLOTTE SMITH.

.....

Is there no secret wile,
No lurking enemy?
His watchful eye is on the wall,
And warily he marks the roof,
And warily survey'd
The path that lay before. SOUTHEY.

SIR Simon and captain Frazer accompanied the travellers as far as Cairndow, where Mr. Ferguson had left his carriage on his way to the Castle. Marion seemed

seemed less fatigued with the ride than might have been expected, and after partaking of a slight repast, they proceeded on their journey.

With sir Simon's hypocritical injunction to write frequently, lady Frazer promised a strict compliance; and being seated in the carriage along with her brother and Emily, with little William asleep on her lap, they waved an adieu to the gentlemen, and drove off.

A postchaise had been provided for the accommodation of her ladyship's own maid, and the nurse who was occasionally to relieve Emily from her young charge.

Mr. Ferguson's old domestic, John Brown, and lady Frazer's footman, attended them on horseback, leading her faithful little Donald, to be in readiness when the advance of spring would permit her to take exercise on horseback.

The journey was performed as slowly, and with as little fatigue to the invalid,

as

as the nature of travelling in the Highlands would permit.

The cheerful and enlightened conversation of her brother, the playfulness of little William, and the genuine attachment of the youthful Emily, beguiled the tediousness of the way. Mr. Ferguson made choice of a different route from that which his sister had pursued on her way to the north, lest any circumstances might recall painful associations to her mind, as likewise with the hope that the novelty of the scenery would withdraw her attention from the concealed sorrow which was destroying her.

Without accident they arrived in due time at the lawyer's hospitable mansion in George-square. Mr. Ferguson ranked among his friends most of the eminent professors of the healing art in the city of Edinburgh. With unfeigned delight he heard them pronounce that his sister's complaints were unattended with danger—that moderate exercise, an attention

tention to temperature and to regimen, were all that would be found requisite for her recovery.

At this period of the year, Mr. Ferguson's mornings were entirely devoted to business, and he was frequently detained in the Court of Session till a very late hour in the evening. Lady Frazer felt not, however, that sense of desolateness which she too frequently experienced in the solitary mansion of her husband. The progressive improvement of little William imparted a degree of the purest satisfaction to the breast of his affectionate mother, and a portion of each day was dedicated to superintending the lessons of Emily Frazer in the different branches of her education. Nor was Mary forgotten: the description given by her brother of the grateful and affectionate disposition of his young charge awakened a strong interest in the bosom of his sister in behalf of this deserted child. At her particular request, Mary was brought

brought from Glencross Cottage, and soon domesticated in the mansion with Emily and William.

The scream of delight which she uttered as she flew into the extended arms of her benefactor, and hid her glowing cheek in his bosom, endeared her to his affectionate sister. She took the lovely girl on her knee, and soon secured for herself an interest in her innocent heart. In a few hours Mary had become so familiar with her new acquaintance, that lady Frazer was the depository of all her little concerns.

Mary was so glad when Mrs. Saunderson told her Mr. Ferguson and John were come back, and that she was to go to Edinburgh to see them. She was so sorry to leave Mrs. Saunderson alone, and Bawty, and poor pussey, and the pretty snowdrops in the garden, and the crocuses that had come out since the snow melted—"And do you know," she continued, "Mrs. Saunderson says she

used to carry you in her arms, and you were a sweet bairn, and that it will break her auld heart if ony ill come o'er ye. She hates sir Simon, and the auld Castle, and the Hielands."

But amidst this narration of old Margaret's hatreds, Mary sunk into a profound slumber. Lady Frazer pressed her lips to the snowy forehead of the innocent girl; what could they be, she thought, that forsook so fair a flower! as she rung to have the sleeping innocent removed to the nursery.

Lady Frazer's amendment kept pace with the rapid advance of spring. Like a scion torn from the parent stem, and transplanted into a barren soil, she drooped and languished; but once more restored to her native earth, she resumed somewhat of her pristine beauty and vigour.

Punctual in the performance of every duty, her ladyship informed sir Simon of her arrival, and the opinion of the medical

dical gentlemen respecting her illness. In the shortest possible time she received a congratulatory answer, as also a request to inform him of every circumstance connected with her health, and that of his boy. Marion sighed when she thought for what unprofitable and worthless pursuits that wife and that child were neglected.

The spring vacation restored at length comparative leisure to the worthy advocate; and with pleasure he prepared to remove with his household to his favourite retreat. It was a mild April day; the rays of a brilliant sun sparkled on the clear surface of Glencross water, as it rippled with a low murmuring sound over its pebbled bed; the fields were gay with the opening blossoms of spring, and the air impregnated with their odoriferous perfumes; the birds carolled on every spray, and the lambkins sported by the side of their dams; but the heart of Marion was not in unison with this

smiling picture of nature. Silent and sad, she revolved in her mind "the days of other years," when, gay and sportive as the fawn, she had frolicked amidst this enchanting landscape, which now, to her distempered fancy, seemed to smile as if in mockery of her woe.

Long, however, she was not suffered to indulge in those painful ruminations; for her watchful brother, guessing the subject of her thoughts, succeeded in drawing her into conversation.

Grateful for his considerate kindness, she struggled during the remainder of the way to maintain an appearance of composure; but transient was the victory she had obtained over herself, for as the carriage wound round the acclivity on which stood the well-remembered cottage, and she beheld old Margaret waiting at the door to receive them, her hard-earned fortitude yielded before the full tide of sorrow, and she sobbed aloud.

The joy of beholding her young favourite

vourite was counteracted by the altered appearance and melancholy air of lady Frazer, and tears blinded the eyes of the worthy old domestic as she led the way to the parlour.

Mr. Ferguson now entered with his nephew, and placed the smiling cherub in the arms of the good dame, who kissed and blessed him, while little Mary, half frantic with joy at finding herself once more in the dear cottage, frolicked from one to another with all the playful vivacity of her years.

The tumult of Marion's spirits on thus revisiting the happy home of her infancy at length subsided into a melancholy calm. Scarcely two years had elapsed since she left it, buoyant in youthful hope; but her dream of happiness had quickly vanished, and she beheld in perspective only a dark and troubled futurity. Still, when she saw her brother's eye beaming on her with fraternal affection—when she contemplated the be-

witching smiles of her darling boy—when she thought of those invaluable friends that she had left behind, she was compelled to confess that her wretchedness was not wholly without alleviation.

While this admirable woman was thus maintaining a virtuous struggle with a melancholy which duty forbade her to indulge, sir Simon returned to his solitary home, with a feeling of joy that he was free from the restraint which the presence of his virtuous wife imposed, in some measure, even on him.

His visits to his friends, in which he had of late more frequently indulged, than on the first days that Marion inhabited his mansion, were only a pretence to free himself from suspicion, since the time occupied in these pretended excursions was mostly passed with a buxom wench in a cottage belonging to his sworn friend Macdonald. This was a poor and proud chieftain, whose unprincipled mind would have shrunk from no

no means, except honourable industry, to maintain the miserable shadow of the feudal state of former days. He was a fit associate for the baronet, and a willing instrument in promoting or concealing his guilty pleasures; and in return managed to disburden him from time to time of a few hundreds of his carefully-hoarded treasure. Since the departure of lady Frazer, this man had been almost a daily guest at the Castle, and with Bruce were the only companions which the tyrannical conduct and haughty manners of sir Simon had left him.

The letters of Marion were duly received, and, for a time, punctually answered; but at length her correspondent slackened in regularity; and, before the conclusion of the summer, ceased to write altogether.

Lady Frazer frequently anticipated with pain the approach of that period which would again tear her from the society of a beloved brother, and consign

her to the solitude of Castle Frazer, and an intimate association with a man who, in spite of herself, she despised. But, with all her causes for sorrow, her frame gradually acquired vigour, and her mind energy. The path of duty lay before her, and she resolutely determined to pursue it.

The valued governess of herself and Helen Frazer still lived; but she had greatly curtailed her establishment, which was now managed by her daughter-in-law, under the immediate superintendance of the old lady herself.

No one mourned more sincerely than did Mrs. Fogo, on observing the alteration in her once-sprightly favourite; nor did the heart of Marion expand with purer satisfaction on meeting any of the acquaintances of her infancy, than it did when pressed to the bosom of her venerable friend.

At her earnest solicitation Mrs. Fogo received Emily Frazer as an inmate

when

when her ladyship removed from town. The affectionate girl wept at the idea of leaving her friend, but Marion knowing that the very limited income of her parents precluded them from bestowing on her such an education as they could wish, was anxious not to suffer the present opportunity to escape of procuring for her the most able instruction that the northern metropolis afforded.

"Papa and mama will be so delighted with your acquisitions when we return to the north," uttered by her ladyship as she resigned her young friend to the care of Mrs. Fogo, not only served in some measure to reconcile Emily to their temporary separation, but proved a spur to future exertion. If a difficult lesson was to be overcome, the idea that parental approbation would reward the acquisition, sweetened the toil of study. —If she found the necessary confinement of a boarding-school irksome, and some of her young associates flippant and

disagreeable, she consoled herself with the anticipation of rejoining her dear lady Frazer at Glencross Cottage during the autumn vacation.

In the mean time, as the health of Marion improved, she began to resume the habits of her youth. She renewed her acquaintance with the cottagers and tenantry on the estate; she consoled them in sickness and adversity; in poverty her purse and her influence were freely devoted to their benefit. Thus blessing and blessed, there were moments when she forgot that the mandate of a husband might call her far away from the only scenes that had power to tranquillize her wounded spirit.

At such times she flew to the society of the children for relief. One evening in particular, when her ladyship was oppressed with more than her usual melancholy, she took little Mary by the hand, and, accompanied by William and his maid, pursued her way to a shady glade,

at

at a short distance from the Cottage. It terminated in a thick wood, bounded by a road leading through the grounds to the village of Glencross. While Mary was busily collecting the wild flowers which grew in profusion around her, to amuse little William, Marion, buried in a painful reverie, unconsciously strolled towards the wood, and seated herself on the stump of a fallen elm. Time flew away unheeded, and the obscurity of twilight had succeeded to a warm and sultry day, when her ruminations were disturbed by the trampling of horses. She looked towards the road, and a deadly sickness came over her as she imagined she recognized in one of the horsemen the form of her husband.

Relieved, however, from the complication of painful feelings which his supposed appearance conjured up, by the travellers taking the road to the village, in place of turning down the avenue leading to the Cottage, Marion pressed her

hand on her throbbing temples, and slowly rejoined the children.

On their way to the house they met Robert, lady Frazer's servant, who was just returned from Glencross, where he had gone in order to get Donald supplied with a shoe he had lost during their morning ride. Robert's face indicated that he was brim-full of intelligence, and her ladyship's surmises, that one of the strangers might actually be sir Simon Frazer, again forcibly recurring to her mind, she falteringly inquired whether he had seen two gentlemen on horseback?

"That I did, my lady," replied the man, "and sure enough I thought it had been sir Simon and his steward; but they were so muffled up that it was impossible to be certain, so I followed them to the inn, but found I had been mistaken, as the name of the master was Sinclair. Donald made a mistake also, my lady," Robert continued, "for he saluted

saluted the horses, as they gallopped past us, as if they had been old stable companions."

Notwithstanding every effort, Marion could not divest her mind during the whole evening of those uneasy feelings which the foregoing occurrence had produced. Her brother observed her flushed cheek and tremulous voice, and imputing it to fatigue, cautioned her against remaining so long exposed to the damps of evening. His sister, grateful for his care, vainly endeavoured to rally her spirits, and, complaining of a headache, retired for the night.

In the solitude of her own chamber she endeavoured to review with calmness the occurrence which had involved her in such perplexity. In spite of Robert's assurance that the name of the stranger was Sinclair, she could not divest herself of the belief that it was actually sir Simon himself; and his narration rather confirmed than dissipated the suspicion.

suspicion. Yet for what purpose could he lurk in disguise around her dwelling? This question she found impossible to solve, and, wearied with conjecture, retired to bed, overcome with fatigue, and soon sunk into an unquiet slumber.

In dreams the image of the baronet again haunted her imagination. With an uplifted knife she beheld him about to immolate the shrieking Mary, whom he held in his savage grasp, when her brother appeared, and arrested the fatal blow.

Again she beheld him turn with frantic fury on the unwelcome intruder, who, instead of her brother, appeared under the form of William Glen. The knife was again brandished with murderous intent, when Marion, breathless with terror, threw herself between her husband and his intended victim.

She awoke with the fright; drops of agony stood on her forehead, and it was some minutes before she could persuade herself

herself that the whole was only the illusion of a fearful dream.

Afraid of a repetition of the terrific phantom, she arose from her restless couch, and stealing slowly into her dressing-room, opened the casement, to breathe the refreshing air of the morning, which had just begun to dawn.

As she sat pensively leaning her head on one hand, a rustling noise in the shrubbery attracted her attention, and looking in the direction whence the sound proceeded, she saw two men cautiously advance from behind a thicket. One of them pointed with his hand towards the Cottage, as if in the act of giving directions to the other. The light was too faint to enable the terrified Marion to discern them perfectly; but from the outline of their figures she was almost convinced it was the two horsemen she had encountered on the foregoing evening.

A shrinking delicacy respecting whatever concerned sir Simon had prevented her

her mentioning the travellers she observed during the evening-walk; but farther silence would be criminal, since they evidently had some design against her brother's mansion.

At breakfast, therefore, she informed Mr. Ferguson of the circumstance, and of the resemblance which the foremost rider certainly bore to sir Simon Frazer. She also mentioned that the same resemblance had struck Robert.

The lawyer remained some time buried in deep rumination, and afterwards starting up, he rung for Robert. Having questioned this domestic, who repeated the tale he had told his lady, Mr. Ferguson turned to his sister, saying—"With your permission I will take Robert with me this morning to Glencross, in order, if possible, to trace these mysterious strangers."

Marion smiled assent, and the servant left the room to prepare the horses.

Her brother then said—"I am of opinion

nion that the two gentlemen must have either been amateur tourists, or looking out for some spot to purchase in our picturesque neighbourhood, and that both you and Robert have been deceived by some fancied resemblance."

Marion gave a smiling assent to her brother's conjecture, though her fears were by no means wholly destroyed.

"I have one favour," he said, "to request," turning back from the door as he was about to mount his horse, "that you would confine your rambles, and those of the children, to the garden, till our return."

Lady Frazer was in no temper of mind to disregard this injunction; and returning to the nursery, endeavoured to amuse herself with the gambols of the children during her brother's absence.

At the inn he learned that two strangers had arrived at night-fall, and about an hour afterwards were joined by a third; that they had supped in a private

vate apartment, at their own request, and retired to rest at an early hour. Two of them walked out by daybreak, and remained abroad for above two hours, after which they all three partook of a hasty breakfast, and immediately afterwards departed, taking the road to Edinburgh. "The tallest of the travellers was called Sinclair; at least such was the name which he told me to write on the bank-note with which he paid the reckoning," said the landlord.

"Have you still the note in your possession?" inquired Mr. Ferguson, "and will you oblige me with a sight of it?"

The note was produced, and indorsed on the back with the name of M'Alister, in the handwriting of sir Simon, with his initials underneath.

If any doubt had remained, after the description given of the strangers by honest John Deans the landlord, this circumstance would have confirmed Mr. Ferguson in the belief, that the mysterious

rious travellers were no other than his brother-in-law and his hopeful steward Bruce. That their appearance in his neighbourhood could originate in no honourable motive, he was well assured; but what that motive could be, baffled every conjecture. He determined, however, to omit no precaution to defeat their designs; and with this view he enjoined Robert, without alarming his lady's fears, never to lose sight of her or the children in their rambles about the grounds, and always to go well armed with pistols.

He procured the five-pound note from Deans, after making him take down the number, and mark it in such a manner that he could identify it if occasion required. He also requested him to be silent respecting their conversation; and secretly and speedily send information to the Cottage, should the strangers again appear at his house, or be seen in the neighbourhood, since he had strong reasons

sons to suspect they had some design on the Cottage, as they had been observed lurking about the grounds in its vicinity.

Deans, like every one else, was warmly attached to Mr. Ferguson, and cheerfully promised compliance with his request.

On their way home, Robert was again cautioned not to betray the discovery they had made to lady Frazer, as it would only needlessly agitate her in her present weak state.

"Alas! no," said the worthy fellow; "my poor lady has suffered too much already from sir Simon, and I believe would have died, like Miss Helen, of a broken heart, had your honour not come and taken her away. But I beg pardon; it does not become me to talk of my betters."

Mr. Ferguson, though a kind and indulgent master, never made confidants of his domestics, yet anxious to ascertain the extent of Marion's wrongs, and

pleased

pleased with the attachment that Robert displayed for his sister, replied—"No, my good fellow, I am not offended; on the contrary, I must have some further conversation with you on the subject; at present, however, we must hurry home, to relieve the anxiety of your lady;" and the lawyer, spurring his horse to a gallop, soon reached the Cottage.

A month passed on without any circumstance having occurred to create a new alarm. Lady Frazer had resumed her rambles in the grounds with the children, but always accompanied or followed by Robert.

One evening that she had lingered later than usual, in the hope of meeting her brother, who had spent the day with a friend, a few miles distant, the trampling of horses announced, as she imagined, his return.

Mary darted like lightning through a stile into the public road, to hail his approach.

approach. But what was the consternation of her ladyship to hear the child utter a frightful scream, after which all remained silent.

As fast as her trembling limbs would permit, Marion hastened forward, to ascertain the cause of her outcry, when, to her astonishment, she beheld Robert struggling to free the terrified child from the grasp of an athletic ruffian, who held her fast with one hand, while with the other he defended himself against his more feeble opponent.

Nearly overpowered by fatigue, the faithful domestic must soon have been overcome, had not the trampling of horses forced the villain to relinquish his prey, and seek safety in flight.

With the rapidity of lightning Marion had flown to alarm the inhabitants of a neighbouring cottage, on beholding the perilous situation of her favourite, and two stout young peasants reached the scene

scene of action just as Mr. Ferguson rode up to the spot.

After listening to a hasty explanation of the affair, he requested them to conduct Robert and the terrified child to the Cottage, while he and his servant galloped off in pursuit of the villain.

Vainly, however, they attempted to descry the object of their pursuit; night began to close in, and, after the strictest search in the village and the surrounding cottages, they desisted from any further attempt, and turned their horses heads homewards.

At the Cottage all was consternation and dismay. Lady Frazer had fainted with the terror and fatigue, and been carried to bed in a very exhausted state. The innocent subject of the outrage Mrs. Saunderson had vainly attempted to pacify, who, when Mr. Ferguson entered, was sobbing as if her heart would break. She flew into the extended arms of her generous protector, and, as if there

shielded

shielded from every danger, sobbed herself to sleep.

Having disposed of his insensible burden, he proceeded to the bedside of his suffering sister, who could only press his hand in silence. Entreating her to endeavour to seek repose, as all danger was past, he left her to the care of her faithful attendant, and kissing his sleeping nephew, retired to visit Robert, who, he was apprehensive, might have suffered a serious injury by his vigilance and fidelity.

Agreeably, however, was he disappointed, for, except fatigue from overexertion and a few slight bruises, he had sustained no inconvenience from the struggle, though he admitted that such was the strength of his opponent, that he must at once have sunk under his powerful grasp, had his arms been unencumbered with the child.

Robert was confident that the villain was not wholly unknown to him; but,

so sudden had been the attack, that he could not recollect when or where he had before seen him.

Those duties performed, our worthy advocate retired to the parlour, and, over his solitary cup of coffee, took a retrospective view of the events which had caused so much alarm and distress in his family.

From the fearful apprehensions of Marion, the conjectures of Robert, the account given of the strangers by honest John Deans, but, above all, from the evidence furnished by the bank-note, not a shadow of doubt remained in Mr. Ferguson's mind, that sir Simon Frazer and his steward were the identical travellers who had been seen by his sister on the road, and afterwards prowling about the shrubbery.

How far the clandestine appearance of the baronet in his grounds was connected with the outrage of the present night, it was difficult to determine; but he felt

strongly inclined to suspect some existing connexion.

That the poor deserted Mary was the sole object of the machinations of the villain, whoever he might be, was sufficiently evident; but even Mr. Ferguson, whose professional avocations had frequently made him a witness of the most sublime virtue, as well as of the utmost depravity of the human character, could scarcely conceive it possible that the love of wealth could have stimulated sir Simon to tear an innocent child from the protection of his roof. Yet he could see no other motive for the daring attempt, except the dread that Mary, at his death, would share his wealth with his sister.

On the following morning Mr. Ferguson rejoiced to behold his sister in the breakfast-parlour when he entered. Her swollen eyes and pallid countenance declared that she had passed a restless night; but anxiety on poor Mary's account had induced her to leave her chamber

chamber at an earlier hour than usual. The alarming outrage which had been committed on the sweet child formed the subject of their conversation during the morning repast; and, after it was finished, the lawyer proceeded with Robert to the village, to ascertain if any intelligence could be procured that might lead to the discovery of the culprit.

During their walk thither, Robert displayed the character of sir Simon Frazer in such a light as made his auditor shudder. He related the fate of Bertha Campbell—the burning M'Coy's cottage—his present disgraceful association with the daughter of one of Macdonald's cotters—and various other instances of his licentious and tyrannical conduct.

"Though my poor lady was ignorant of all those ways," continued Robert, "she yet suffered enough to have killed her, had not your honour come just in the nick of time to save her; and, if I

might make bold to give my opinion, it is all along of sir Simon's contrivance that the child was to be carried off; for I heard him one day say to my lady something about a base-born brat being your honour's heir; and the baronet is mighty fond of money. Besides, now, when I have come to my senses, I believe it was Sandy, the giant, who contended with me last night."

On inquiry Mr. Ferguson learned that Sandy the giant was a retainer of Mr. Macdonald's, and dignified by him with the appellation of his gamekeeper.

Had a doubt remained of the turpitude of sir Simon Frazer's conduct, the details given by Robert would have wholly dissipated it. But the indignation which burned in his bosom against the worthless baronet, and which, under any other circumstances, would have led the intrepid advocate to demand instant satisfaction, was tempered, and kept within

within due bounds, by a regard for the future peace of his sister, and affection for his infant nephew.

Mr. Ferguson was not, however, a character to be trampled on with impunity, and he instantly wrote a detail of the circumstances which had taken place to sir Simon Frazer, stating the evidence in his possession against Bruce and the gamekeeper of his friend Macdonald.

"Had it not been," he continued, "for the lenity of your angel wife, the employer of these abandoned wretches would, ere now, have stood fully exposed to view. Should any future outrage be, however, committed against the meanest member of my household, neither tears nor entreaties shall prevent me from dragging them forward to the scorn and execration of the world."

Sir Simon gnashed his teeth in rage on the perusal of this epistle, which contained the first intimation of the failure

of his base project. One source of consolation, however, it contained; the lawyer did not appear to glance the most distant suspicion towards him as the instigator of the outrage. Still he was anxious to exculpate Bruce, and with this view returned a speedy answer to the communication, assuring Mr. Ferguson that his steward had not been from home at the period he mentioned.

By the same conveyance he addressed lady Frazer, expressing the most hypocritical anxiety for her health, and that of his boy, at the same time regretting that some improvements he was carrying on, and which required his constant superintendence, prevented him from flying to her, on learning the terror she had encountered.

No further alarm having occurred to disturb the tranquillity of Glencross Cottage, its amiable inhabitants, after a while, resumed their usual avocations. The children improved apace, and so much

much did the kind dispositions of little Mary win on her ladyship's affections, that her heart made no difference between her and her own William.

The autumn vacation proved a jubilee to the children, for Emily Frazer arrived from Edinburgh, to spend this period at the Cottage. Marion was delighted with the progress she had made in the different branches of her education; and young as she was, her society proved a great acquisition during the absence of her brother, whose duty obliged him to attend the southern circuit.

Two years passed on, and Marion still remained an inmate of her brother's house. Twice had her husband visited the south, for a short time, during this period; but, as if by tacit consent, no mention had been made of her return to Castle Frazer. He seemed pleased with the improvement of his boy, but, to the great relief of his unhappy wife, express-

ed no wish to remove him from under the protection of his uncle.

About this time Mr. Ferguson claimed captain Frazer's promise of placing Bouverie under his care; and, as Mrs. Frazer was anxious to embrace her friend, and clasp her Emily to her maternal bosom, they resolved to accompany the boy to Edinburgh.

CHAP-

CHAPTER VI.

For foreign ports and lands unknown,
Lo, the firm sailor leaves his own;
Obedient to the rising gale,
Unmoors his bark, and spreads his sail,
Defies the ocean and the wind,
Nor mourns the joys he left behind.

COTTON.

PLEASANT yet melancholy was the meeting between these amiable women. Though sorrow had set her stamp on Marion's features, yet Mrs. Frazer sincerely rejoiced to behold the improvement in her health since last they parted; while the poor disconsolate mourner, on the other hand, remarked with a sigh the expression of calm contented happiness which beamed on the features of her friend.

This expression was quickly heightened

ed to rapture, as Emily bounded into the room, and threw herself into the arms of her mother, from which, however, she was quickly released to meet the fond embrace of her father and brother.

If the parents of Emily were pleased with the improvement of her manners and appearance, how much were they delighted with her rapid advancement in every elegant and useful acquirement! Their gratitude to lady Frazer did not overflow in words, but the silent pressure of the hand, and the eye bedimmed with tears, spoke more forcibly to her heart, and proved a balm to her wounded spirit.

"If happiness be not my portion, if I be doomed to tread this weary pilgrimage alone," she mentally ejaculated, "may I extract pleasure from the happiness which fortune has put it in my power to confer on my fellow-pilgrims."

The fortnight allotted by Mrs. Frazer for

for her visit passed rapidly away, and another month was added to it, ere she could tear herself from the society of her friend and her beloved children. But she had other ties awaiting her at Fairy Cottage, and it became necessary to fix a day for their departure.

At Marion's earnest request the youthful Emily was still left under her care; and the friends at last separated, with added esteem for each other.

Bouverie, now become a fine tall lad, was for the present domesticated at the Cottage, as Mr. Ferguson wished another year to elapse, and that he should improve still farther his knowledge of the classics, before commencing his attendance on the classes at the university. With this view he engaged the worthy and learned minister of Glencross to receive him as a pupil. The walk was short, and the young scholar returned each night to the home of his protector.

Though of a studious turn, and ardent

in the pursuit of knowledge, he was, during the hours of relaxation, the life and soul of the nursery. Emily had returned to Mrs. Fogo's, soon after the departure of her parents; but he delighted to trace the dawn of intellect in little William; while Mary, with her blushing cheeks and laughing black eyes, had irresistibly fixed his regard at the first moment he beheld her.

Several years her senior, he took on himself, during their frequent rambles, the office of her protector; while within doors, his greatest delight consisted in superintending her lessons. The acquiring of grammatical rules was, to Mary, as it is to most children, an irksome task; with delight, therefore, as soon as she was perfect in her lesson, was her book thrown aside, to follow Bouverie through the woods and glades of Glenaross, in search of plants to complete the botanical collection he had begun in the north.

On their return she would watch over him

him while he dissected and arranged the spoils of the field; and having once conquered the terms, she made considerable progress in this delightful science, even before her reason had fully unfolded itself. With her pencil also she endeavoured to imitate the beauteous productions of nature, and the commendations of Bouverie proved her sweetest reward.

Lady Frazer had the happy art of rendering all the associations of her pupils favourable to virtue; yet a direct precept of morality never passed her lips. She would watch with them the joyous hum of the insects, as they sported in the sunny glade, or the delighted butterfly roving from flower to flower, in search of the sweets they contained; she would point out to them the ingenuity with which the feathered tribes constructed their nests, and the care with which they reared and watched over their offspring, till so pleasurable became

became the sensations connected with these simple objects, in the mind of her young companions, that as soon would they have voluntarily resigned pleasure, and embraced pain, as have practised any species of cruelty towards animals.

Charity, in the common acceptation of the word, was never practised by her ladyship; but, in order to impress on the infant mind an interest in the well-being of the whole human race, she associated the children in many little schemes for assisting the industry and adding to the comforts of those around them. In this way, even before their faculties were fully unfolded, they were accustomed to derive happiness from the practice of the social virtues.

As they grew up, the duties arising from the complicated and corrupted state of society were gradually unfolded to their view. She attempted not to conceal that much physical as well as moral evil existed in the world, or to account for

for its existence on the futile plea, that "partial evil is universal good."

In answer to the puzzling questions of infancy, she frankly acknowledged the limited faculties of man, and that, in leaving the guidance of the senses, and entering the regions of invisibility, the mind soon becomes bewildered among its intricate and perplexing mazes.

The connexion supposed to subsist between the moral actions of man in this life, and his happiness or misery subsequent to death, she conceived but a feeble barrier, when opposed to the strength of human passions. To enlist these passions on the side of virtue, or, in other words, to generate by habit and association an enlarged self-love, which finds only happiness in the happiness of others, was the sole object of her most strenuous endeavours.

The mind thus disciplined from infancy extracts pleasure even from the self-denials which virtue exacts, and Marion

rion traced, with a joy to which her heart had long been a stranger, the faint dawnings of those principles which, she trusted, when sprung up to maturity, would alike render her beloved pupils invulnerable to the allurements of prosperity, and the bitter shafts of adversity.

In such delightful anticipations lady Frazer found a balm to her wounded spirit. During sir Simon's occasional visits to the south, he constantly talked of forming an establishment in Edinburgh, and was as constantly persuaded by Mr. Ferguson to defer his intention to a future period.

In the mean time Emily Frazer, after completing her education, returned to her paternal home, and by her amiable manners and affectionate attentions, soothed the sorrows of her parents for the deprivation they sustained in losing the society of their eldest son.

Charles Frazer, from the first dawnings of reason, took great delight to read

or

or listen to the tale of his maternal grandfather's exploits. The seeds of a chivalrous spirit thus early implanted in his youthful and ardent mind, were fostered and brought to maturity from the local situation of their habitation. Situated near the grand estuary of Loch Fyne, Charles viewed the vast expanse of waters, blue and wide, with enthusiasm, as he marked them out for the scene of his future renown.

Captain Frazer had found in rural retirement an internal satisfaction which he had never experienced in the tented field, amidst scenes of blood and carnage. Though endowed with the most unshrinking courage, he knew not, in his calm moments, how to reconcile to the dictates of reason and humanity a profession which necessarily involved a surrender of the right of private judgment, and obliged a rational being to deal out death and devastation among his fellow-men, to gratify perchance the ambition,

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the cupidity, or the lust of power, in the potentate he served.

Yet he recollected how futile would have appeared such reasoning, opposed to his own youthful ardour, to be enrolled among the heroes of his country, and he ceased to oppose the deep-rooted predilection of his son for a naval life. Charles was accordingly entered a midshipman, and in a week after the return of his sister, took leave of Fairy Cottage, to join the Orion frigate in Leith roads.

During the four months that he remained on this station, he received the most unremitting and friendly attentions from the worthy family at Glencross Cottage.

The fraternal regard of Charles and Bouverie was ardent and sincere; and every moment they could spare from duty and study was passed in the society of each other.

The countenance and attention of a man of Mr. Ferguson's celebrity proved

of

of the greatest consequence to Charles with his commander, who, though a brave and courageous man, and an able seaman, was severe and haughty to his inferior officers, more especially when they were destitute of family consequence.

At the hospitable board of the worthy advocate, captain Parker was always a welcome guest; and, indeed, divining the nature of his character, Mr. Ferguson projected several entertainments solely on his account.

When their sailing orders arrived, he proceeded on board the frigate, with Bouverie, to bid adieu to the young sailor. While the latter was listening to the animated anticipations of the ardent midshipman, Mr. Ferguson motioned the captain to the state-room, and presenting him with a handsome gold watch, as a token of remembrance, he recommended Charles to his peculiar attention, adding—"Your drafts upon me shall

shall be answered to any amount you may deem necessary to support him as a gentleman, and the son of an ancient house; though, at his early age, I would not wish to tempt him to the practice of indiscriminate profusion, by placing a large sum of money in his hands at once."

Captain Parker, under an uncouth exterior, possessed many estimable qualities and a good heart, though his virtues were partly obscured by an inordinate family pride. He pressed the hand of the benevolent lawyer, and promised to become a father to the young midshipman—a promise which he solemnly kept, and which doubtless laid the foundation of the future fame and high honours to which his pupil attained.

The bitterness of parting from his friend and brother once overcome, Charles soon recovered his accustomed hilarity of temper. In his birth he found a small chest, with a note, enclosing

ing the key. It merely contained a few lines from Mr. Ferguson, begging his acceptance of some necessaries, which he conceived would be found useful on the West India station, whither they were bound.

On opening this unexpected present, he found it contained, besides an additional uniform, and other appendages of dress, a small but valuable collection of professional books, as well as some lighter works, maps, and philosophical instruments. In one corner lay a purse, with fifty guineas, and a slip of paper, on which was written—"To Charles Frazer, from his mother's friend, Marion Frazer."

This simple tribute of affection to the mother he adored, drew tears from the eyes of Charles, and he mentally vowed to render himself worthy of such unexampled kindness.

The boat went ashore for the last time, and with it the young midshipman transmitted

transmitted the adieus of his full heart to the parents he almost worshipped, and the friends who had entwined themselves around his grateful heart.

In a few hours the sails were unfurled, and the young sailor bade farewell for many a long year to Scotia's beloved shores.

About this period lord William Frazer returned from the Continent. He was completely disappointed in the hope which had induced him to adopt the hazardous expedient of seeking the British army.

The faithful servant of his son had fallen fighting by the side of his master; and not one of the officers of his regiment knew the source of his melancholy, though all had observed, that during the few last months of their stay in Britain, he was strangely altered from the happy joyous youth they had first known him.

After reaching the seat of war, he had, however, they agreed, recovered in a great

great measure his tranquillity, though still occasionally sad and pensive.

On the morning of the fatal day in which he fell, he gave in charge to the reverend Mr. Maitland, the chaplain of their regiment, a packet, addressed to Miss Frazer, of Castle Frazer, &c. with injunctions to transmit it to Scotland, should it be his fate not to survive the expected encounter. A letter to his father was also entrusted to the reverend gentleman; and by him they were both transmitted by the same conveyance to Britain. The last, however, only reached the place of its destination, and poor Charles's secret perished with him.

Lord William met his niece with feelings of the sincerest admiration and attachment. He inwardly lamented her hard fate in being united to his unworthy nephew; and respecting the delicacy which restrained her from uttering a complaint, he resolved to cherish and protect her, and the infant William, as

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the last relics which fate had left of his former happiness.

Mutual was the pleasure of her ladyship and Mr. M'Gregor on meeting after such a long absence; and as time had softened her sorrow for the loss of the amiable friend of her youth, she took a mournful satisfaction in listening to her reverend preceptor, who was never weary of recounting the virtues of his former pupil, the gentle Helen.

Years rolled away, and still found lady Frazer an inmate of Glencross Cottage; while her unworthy partner continued immersed in the grossest vices at his castle in the north. William had now taken the place of Bouverie, as the pupil of the pastor of Glencross, while the latter had been removed to the university, where, with indefatigable zeal, he laboured to become worthy of the liberal patronage he experienced.

Mary's improvement was great beyond her years; her protector had never made a mystery

a mystery of the way in which she was first introduced to his notice; so that being accustomed from the earliest dawn of recollection to the idea of her deserted state, she regarded Mr. Ferguson with a kind of holy enthusiasm, as supplying to her all the endearing relations of kindred.

For lady Frazer she also felt the warmest attachment; ere reason had fully unfolded itself, often would she leave her childish sports, and essay every little endearment to win her from the sorrow which too often clouded her brow. In short, Glencross was the whole world to the sweet infant; nor had a care ever intruded into her innocent bosom, till the removal of Bouverie to the university deprived her of the companion of her sports and the associate of her studies.

Restless and unhappy, Mary wandered listless and dejected amidst those scenes through which she had only a few

days before bounded with the joyous hilarity of youth and health. Marion, with pain, observed the change; she had also remarked the quivering lip and fluctuating colour of Bouverie's countenance when he bade adieu to his favourite companion, and young as they both were, she dreaded that, unknown to themselves, they cherished for each other a more tender feeling than fraternal affection.

To snap the train of these associations ere they became strengthened by habit, lady Frazer, with her brother's approbation, placed Mary in the seminary of her respected Mrs. Fogo. She also wrote to her friends at Fairy Cottage the suspicions she entertained—"You may laugh," she continued, "at the notion of schoolboy love; but so seriously am I impressed with the idea that their present feelings will ripen with advancing years into an attachment that may stamp the happiness or misery of their after life, that

that I am determined, should the mystery of Mary's birth prove an obstacle to her admission into your family, that they meet no more."

"Let them meet, my dear friend," wrote Mrs. Fraser in return; "let their affections take a free course. Think better of Malcolm and your friend than to suppose that the early misfortunes of the sweet girl, in being deserted by the authors of her being, could render her less acceptable to us as a daughter."

This doubt removed from the mind of lady Frazer, she no longer restrained the intercourse of her young favourites, either in town or country, except in so far as their different studies kept them apart.

As she had foreseen, each revolving vacation, passed beneath the rustic shades of Glencross, drew still closer the ties which united the youthful pair.

With unfeigned delight would they explore the romantic scenery so faithfully

delineated by their favourite poet. Often would they linger near the picturesque fall at the head of Glenerose water, still denominated "*Habbie's How,*" or, seated beneath the birch-trees, on the margin of the stream, listen to the "*singin din*" of the waterfall. At others they would traverse the "*flowry hown, betwеen twa verdant braes,*" and in idea listen to the defence of true love by the youthful Peggy. Sometimes, reclining on the gowany sward,

> "Beneath the south side of a craigy bield,
> Whare crystal springs the halesome waters yield,"

would they mingle their voices in chanting the "Wauking o' the Fauld," or some of the other popular airs of their native Scotland.

Blessed in each other's society, a thought of futurity never entered their minds; to them each day teemed with enjoyment, and every night was passed in the calm repose of innocence.

The

The meeting of the Court of Session was the mandate for Mr. Ferguson's removal with his young friend to Edinburgh; but as the autumn was uncommonly fine, lady Frazer did not purpose joining them for a few weeks.

Mary's spirit sunk on the departure of her young companion; the woods and streams around the Cottage remained the same, but in her eyes they were shorn of half their beauties.

Marion observed the listlessness of her favourite, and took care to engage her in constant occupation, though her own spirits felt the want of her brother's cheerful society.

A week dragged heavily away with the fair friends; and Sunday at last came, which was to them a day of jubilee, as the gentlemen usually rode out to dinner. After breakfast, lady Frazer, with her youthful companion hanging on her arm, bent her steps in the direc-

tion of Edinburgh, in the hope of descrying their approach.

After descending the acclivity on which the Cottage stood, they turned into a plantation of firs skirting the public road, in order to shelter themselves from the heat and glare of a warm autumn sun.

William gambled by their side, stopping at every sound, in hopes of seeing his uncle approach. The clattering of horses' feet at length greeted the ears of the impatient boy, and he sprung to a gap in the fence to watch their appearance, but soon returned to his mother with disappointment portrayed on his countenance, saying it was only strangers.

Lady Frazer sunk nearly fainting on a hillock, to the dismay of her companions, for her ear too certainly informed her that the strangers were no other than Sir Simon and his servant. A shud-

dering

dering sensation of horror had seized her as this conviction reached her mind; but making an effort to conquer this momentary weakness, she placed her arm within that of Mary, and continued to pursue her walk, with the view of acquiring composure to meet the man who in an evil hour she had constituted the arbiter of her fate.

Perhaps the latent hope of her brother's appearance led her forward, as she felt his presence was her greatest support under every trial. In this hope she was not disappointed, for on reaching a stile at the extremity of the plantation, the joyful exclamation of William was followed by the appearance of his uncle himself.

Mr. Ferguson and his young companion leapt from their horses, which they sent forward by the servant, and joined the ladies in the wood. Marion took the arm of her brother, and desiring the young folks to amuse themselves as long

as they pleased, took the path leading to the house.

With considerable perturbation she informed him, that sir Simon had passed a few minutes before. She had said enough; the lawyer understood her feelings, and pressing her hand, said, in a cheerful voice—"But he must not rob me of my sister; your health is too delicate to encounter a northern winter."

Reassured by his kindness, lady Frazer prepared to appear before her husband. As they came in sight of the house, the baronet approached to meet them; she extended the hand of welcome, which he convulsively pressed to his lips; and relinquishing it, turned hastily round, and shook Mr. Ferguson by the hand. The flush of health had disappeared from his countenance; his eyes were sunk and haggard, and there was a restlessness in his manners which indicated that his mind was not at peace.

A sentiment of pity, mingled with the contempt

contempt which Mr. Ferguson always felt towards the baronet, had somewhat softened the unbending dignity with which he usually received him. Leading the way to the parlour, he inquired after his health, to which the other replied, that for the last few months he had been far from well; that he believed his mode of life, for some time past, had proved injurious to his constitution; for that since Castle Frazer had lost its chief attraction, bowing gallantly to Marion, he had literally pursued the occupation of a hunter and fisher. "To lure back my fair truant," he continued, "and introduce my boy to his clansmen, is the purport of my present visit; and I trust lady Frazer now finds her health sufficiently confirmed to undertake the journey."

Marion's agitation prevented her trusting her voice to reply; she therefore merely bowed her assent; and hearing the voices of the merry group without,

instantly left the room, under the pretence of seeking her boy.

Flying to a retired arbour in the garden, she threw herself on a seat, and, pressing her hand on her burning forehead, remained in a stupor of mute despair.

Often had she contemplated the period when she would be compelled to relinquish the protection of her brother, and again return to the roof where she had spent so many miserable days; but the trial had been so long delayed, that at last it found her unprepared.

But something must be resolved on; either she must determine to drag on to age a life of wretchedness, or yield her boy to the guardianship of his father. Of two painful alternatives she made choice of the former, and immediately proceeded in search of her young friends.

They were now out of hearing, and with slow and lingering steps she re-entered the parlour.

"I per-

"I perfectly agree with sir Simon," said her brother, as he placed Marion between them on a sofa, "that William ought to be introduced to his clansmen, before his Lowland habits and manners become so confirmed, that the home of his ancestors will appear to him like a foreign land. But of that there is, I believe, little dread for some time to come; at any rate, the life of his mother is too valuable to us all to be endangered for such a chimera. I have therefore stipulated for delay, till a July sun shall have thawed the frozen tops of the Highland mountains, lest your delicate frame should suffer from too abrupt a change of climate."

Never did the criminal about to be led to execution hail a reprieve with more sincere joy, than did the disconsolate lady Frazer bless the timely interference to save her from a bondage worse than death. But short was her rejoicing, for on turning her eyes on the altered fea-

tures of her husband, she became convinced that it was her duty to soften, by her presence and attention, his evident sufferings. To know and to practise virtue, was one and the same thing in the well-regulated mind of her ladyship; turning, therefore, to her brother, she thanked him for this fresh proof of his tenderness, adding—"But while sir Simon's health remains in a precarious state, I should justly be accused of selfishness, were I to decline attending him from any fancied injury to myself."

"Angel!" murmured the baronet, as he again seized her hand, and pressed it with a convulsive grasp.

At this moment Mr. Ferguson threw open the door, and admitted the joyous group they left in the wood. Bouverie and Mary had made a *king's cushion* with their hands, on which William was enthroned, with an arm thrown over the neck of each of his supporters. Delight was strongly pictured on the faces of all the

the three; exercise had imparted a glow to their complexions, and joy sparkled in their eyes and animated their features.

Sir Simon started up to embrace his boy, but suddenly recoiled, and leaning his forehead on the mantlepiece, uttered a suppressed groan.

The expression of his countenance, and the agitation he evinced, escaped Marion, who was intently viewing the happy group before her; but Mr. Ferguson marked it with feelings very unfavourable to her husband. The same baneful glance he had often before observed him dart at the innocent Mary, and the attempt made to wrest the lovely child from his protection, which he was fully convinced originated in the machinations of the baronet, forcibly recurred to his mind, and it required all his affection to his sister to suppress the expressions of indignation that hovered on his lips.

Lady

Lady Fraser took William in her arms, and presented him to his father—. "You cannot now call him a puny boy," she said, with a sweet but mournful smile. "William, my love, welcome papa to Glencross."

The sweet fellow flew into his arms, which opened to receive him; perhaps it was the bitterest moment of his life. Conscience whispered that he was unworthy of such a wife and such a son.

Bouverie next claimed his notice, and anxiously inquired after the beloved inhabitants of Fairy Cottage; but the blushing and disconcerted Mary shrunk from his regards, and instinctively sought protection by the side of her benefactor.

With the exception of the two boys, a certain degree of restraint pervaded the rest of the party. Mr. Ferguson saw and pitied the struggles of his sister, and again reverted to sir Simon's wish, that she and William should accompany him back to the north.

He

He urged her delicate state of health, which unfitted her to brave the rigours of a Highland winter, the distance from medical advice, and the impossibility of taking exercise in a carriage, as reasons for deferring her return home till summer. If sir Simon required a nurse, he would likewise, he continued, require a physician, and would therefore propose that the baronet should, for a season, relinquish the pursuits of hunting and fishing to domesticate himself at Glencross Cottage.—"As to you, young sir," he said, patting William's rosy cheek, "being spoiled for a Highlander, in a few years you will have as great a stake in the south as in the north, and may therefore choose between the smiling valleys of Mid-Lothian and the Alpine scenery of your birthplace.

The bait succeeded; compunction, parental pride, and every other feeling, were swallowed up in the love of wealth; and had the future happiness of his son depended

depended on his removal, he would have been suffered to remain, for the distant prospect of becoming heir to the possessions of his uncle.

On the following morning the whole party proceeded to Edinburgh; and the baronet, weary of the elegant and enlightened society which frequented Mr. Ferguson's mansion, sought in the haunts of dissipation and profligacy an oblivion of the dismal forebodings with which his mind was unceasingly tormented.

At the end of a fortnight he suddenly departed for the north, to the great relief of Mary, who felt an uneasiness in his presence for which she could not account.

CHAP-

CHAPTER VII.

But summer months bring wilding shoots,
From bud to bloom, from bloom to fruit;
And years draw on our human span,
From child to boy, from boy to man. SCOTT.

THE tranquillity which sir Simon's unexpected visit had interrupted being again restored, lady Frazer once more sought to forget her misfortunes in contributing to the happiness of her incomparable brother, and the improvement of her young companions.

Bouverie, just rising into manhood, displayed all those bodily and mental perfections of which his early youth gave so fair a promise; while each day added to the fascinations of the blooming Mary.

The nature of their attachment became

came more and more evident to their benevolent protectors; but as with them, at least, "the course of true love ran smooth," no notice whatever was taken of the discovery.

Bouverie's mornings were spent in study, while Mary, under the superintendence of Mrs. Fogo, was still pursuing her education. These short absences gave added zest to the pleasure they experienced, when, in the evening, they again met in the domestic circle.

As the time approached when sir Simon was expected to claim his lady's promise of returning to the north, the health and spirits of this ill-fated woman gradually began to decline. Often, as she fixed her eyes on the youthful William, happy as health and innocence could make him, the silent tear would steal down her wan cheek, and she would fly to the solitude of her dressing-room, to indulge in that grief which she restrained in the presence of her brother.

It

It was now that the virtues of Mary shone forth with additional lustre. Frequently would this amiable child resist the solicitations of her youthful friends, to join them in some little scheme of pleasure, in order to cheer the spirits of her benefactress. Even Bouverie begged in vain when she thought her presence would beguile, for a time, lady Frazer of her sorrows.

One evening that she had declined going to the theatre, because she knew Mr. Ferguson was engaged to dine abroad with a party of professional friends, she was seated in the drawing-room with Bouverie and her ladyship, when a servant announced the reverend Mr. Glen.

A hectic glow tinged the cheeks of Marion, which the next moment was succeeded by a deadly paleness; but recovering her self-possession, she extended towards him the hand of welcome.

Mr.

Mr. Glen saw and pitied her feelings. He immediately presented her a letter from sir Simon Frazer, of which he had been the bearer, as also a packet from her friends at Fairy Cottage.

Her ladyship requested Mary to order tea, and apologizing to Mr. Glen, retired to peruse her letters. That from her husband informed her, that, anxious as he was to see her reinstated in Frazer Castle, he must delay that happiness for some time longer, since a fire having consumed part of that edifice, it would be an improper habitation for her ladyship until it had undergone the necessary repairs.

A weight seemed removed from the heart of Marion at the intelligence contained in this letter, and she returned to the parlour with something like the elastic step of her happy days.

The intelligence from Fairy Cottage was also of a pleasing nature. Charles had

had distinguished himself by a coolness and bravery beyond his years in several actions while on the Jamaica station.

"On our return home," wrote captain Parker to the delighted parents, "we fell in with an enemy's frigate, to which we gave chase; and soon coming up with her, a warm onset ensued. During the heat of the action, my young midshipman observed them throw the dispatches which they carried overboard, and instantly springing after them, was so fortunate as to reach in safety with his prize the boat I caused to be lowered on perceiving his danger.

"With a view to his reaping the reward of this valorous enterprise, I have sent him home with the dispatches to the Admiralty, and trust, that as the period of his noviciate as a midshipman is now nearly expired, you will have the happiness of welcoming your son as a lieutenant;

lieutenant; at least such should be the case, if our government wishes to encourage that spirit of daring which has hitherto rendered our navy the boast of Britons and the terror of their enemies."

In ten days after the receipt of this packet, Charles arrived at Edinburgh on his way to the north. He had been complimented by the lords of the Admiralty on his achievement, and, after undergoing the necessary examinations, with the greatest credit to himself, was presented with a lieutenant's commission. Six weeks' leave of absence was likewise granted to him, and he had hastened on the wings of affection to embrace his revered parents.

The frigate having struck after he regained the vessel, the prize-money would be considerable. This sum, joined to others he had a right to receive for captures while on the West India station,

station, he empowered Mr. Ferguson to draw, and entreated him to dispose of it to the best advantage, as a small provision for his sisters.

The generous youth then proceeded to Fairy Cottage with the greatest expedition, where he was received with rapture by his affectionate parents.

In the mean time Mr. Glen had solicited and obtained a private interview with Mr. Ferguson. He had undertaken the journey at the earnest request of Mrs. Frazer, who was anxious that the degrading habits and pursuits of sir Simon might be fully explained to the worthy advocate, in order that he might adopt such measures as would, if possible, for ever free his sister from the thraldom of an association with a being so depraved.

Besides the habits of intoxication, in which he now indulged without restraint, he had, when last in Edinburgh, been deeply smitten with the charms of a female

a female singer who held a subordinate engagement in the theatre. His hasty and unexpected departure for the north was now fully accounted for, as it appeared from Mr. Glen that this lady had been the companion of his journey.

To a handsome person, and not unpleasing countenance, she joined the most artful and designing manners, and had so completely ensnared the baronet in her toils, that he had, in defiance of common decency, installed her in Frazer Castle as its mistress.

"While the infatuation continues, he will doubtless avoid all intercourse with his deserted wife," continued the divine; "but still the friends of the amiable lady Frazer grieve to reflect that a wretch, sunk below the dignity of the human species, should possess the power of farther molesting the peace of this admirable woman."

Mr. Ferguson listened with strong and irrepressible indignation to the tale

of

of sir Simon's crimes. The laws of Scotland, he well knew, would afford redress to his sister's wrongs, or his own ready arm might prove her avenger. But he also knew that her very existence was wrapped up in her affection for himself and her beloved William.

In applying for a dissolution of her ill-fated union, sir Simon had a father's right to claim the guardianship of his son while he continued a minor; and no personal consideration, he was aware, would induce Marion to risk the most remote chance of her darling boy being torn from her arms.

Should he, on the contrary, seek honourable redress, he might fall by the hand of her husband, or deprive that husband of existence; and in either case it would inflict a mortal blow on the already-lacerated heart of his sister.

Mr. Ferguson, after weighing a subject on all sides, was prompt in his re-

solves. Leaving Mr. Glen an inmate of his house, he set off for the north the following morning by daybreak, accompanied by his faithful servant, John Brown, and a solicitor in whom he could confide.

In the shortest possible time he arrived at Frazer Castle, and unannounced and unexpected, appeared in the presence of his brother-in-law. His blood boiled on beholding Mrs. Dear occupy his sister's place at the dinner-table; but, checking his rising indignation, he requested the crest-fallen baronet to grant him a few minutes' audience.

The lady kept her seat with the most unblushing effrontery, in spite of a beseeching glance from sir Simon, that she would withdraw.

Mr. Ferguson, however, felt no delicacy towards such a woman, and, without giving Frazer time to recover his scattered thoughts, proceeded to inform him

him that the purport of his visit was to arrange a permanent separation between him and lady Frazer.

"With your present feelings," the advocate continued, throwing a look of contempt towards his fair companion, "I can anticipate no objections, so far as my sister is concerned. Neither can I suppose you so lost to every honourable feeling as to wish your son, the heir of an ancient house, to become an inmate beneath your roof under present circumstances. Agree, then, to place your wife and boy under the joint guardianship of your uncle and myself, until the latter attain the age of twenty-one. I have already made a provision for defraying the whole expence of his education and establishment in life; he shall not be taught to despise his father; and should the mist of passion, which now obscures your reason, be dissipated by advancing years, I trust you may find in your son the comforter of your old age."

Sir Simon hesitated, but the fascinations of Mrs. Dear, and the dread of disobliging Mr. Ferguson and his uncle, and thus diverting their wealth into different channels, at length prevailed, and he gave a half-reluctant consent.

The solicitor produced the deed, which was signed by the baronet, and properly witnessed, after which the two gentlemen bade adieu to the Castle, and pursued their way to Fairy Cottage.

For some time after their departure, sir Simon remained in a sort of waking dream. The treasures which he slighted and neglected, while in his possession, now that he had deprived himself of them by his own act, acquired an additional value in his eyes. But the meretricious blandishments of his companion, and copious libations of claret, soon chased away reflection.

At the Cottage they met a heartfelt welcome. Dinner was over some hours before their arrival; but the hospitable board

board was quickly spread with the best cheer the house could afford.

The night was wearing on apace, and captain Frazer absolutely interdicted the departure of the travellers. The Cottage was small, but the young sailor cut short the difficulty, by relinquishing his bed to the solicitor, and finding a birth for himself in one of the sofas in the parlour.

After that gentleman and the young folks retired for the night, Mr. Ferguson communicated to his friends the arrangement he had made with the baronet, and which afforded them the greatest satisfaction.

All delicacy was now at an end, and captain Frazer related so many circumstances, highly disgraceful to his relative, that had lately come to his knowledge, that the worthy advocate rejoiced more than ever that he had rescued his sister and her boy from the power of so depraved a villain.

The next morning Mr. Ferguson bade adieu to his friends at the Cottage, after having prevailed on Mrs. Frazer to consent that Emily should accompany the lieutenant to Edinburgh, on his return to London, and remain with his sister during the remainder of the winter.

The journey southward was performed in as short a period as that to the north; but the heart of the advocate was lightened of a heavy load. His benevolent countenance beamed with a joy to which it had long been a stranger, as he pressed his sister in his arms, and kissed the blooming cheek of William.

When left alone with lady Frazer, he communicated to her that he had made a flying visit to Frazer Castle, and taken Fairy Cottage in his progress homeward.

"I have procured for you the pleasure of a visit from Emily Frazer, who is to accompany her brother as far as Edinburgh, on his return to London; and I have procured for myself the still greater pleasure

pleasure of retaining my sister and her boy until he reaches the years of maturity.

The quivering lip and pallid countenance of Marion convinced her brother how deeply she was agitated; and wishing to calm all her fears, and get rid of the odious subject for ever, he continued —"Castle Frazer is no fit residence for my gentle sister; I must therefore request you to dismiss it in future from your thoughts. Sir Simon has constituted myself and lord William Frazer joint guardians of you and his son, and I have the vanity to think," he continued, with a smile, "that we are well qualified to execute the task."

So saying, he pressed the hand of her ladyship, which trembled with a contrariety of painful and pleasing feelings, and left the room.

The certainty, however, that she was freed from all importunity to return to a home which had been to her only a home

of misery, and that her unworthy husband had deprived himself of the power to wrest from her the last hope of her desolate heart, in a short time produced a salutary change on her health and spirits.

The gaiety of former years was indeed fled, never to return; but in the expanding virtues of her son, in the happiness of her young favourites, in the endearments of sisterly affection, and in the society of a select circle of enlightened and attached friends, she found balm to her lacerated heart. If joy was no longer the attendant of her steps, peace and contentment were at least the inmates of her bosom.

CHAP-

CHAPTER VIII.

Fair laughs the morn, and soft the zephyrs blow,
While proudly riding o'er the azure realm,
In gallant trim the gilded vessel goes,
Regardless of the sweeping whirlwind's sway,
That hushed in grim repose, expects his evening prey.
GRAY.

IN undisturbed tranquillity several succeeding years flew rapidly away. Bouverie had terminated his academical studies, and in a short period would be called to the bar. His generous patron anticipated the success of his young friend, and spared no pains in giving him those instructions which he conceived would prove useful in regulating his conduct in the arduous profession he was about to commence.

He was listened to by the ardent

youth with the reverence of a son, and the warm enthusiasm of unbounded affection.

Mary had, as nearly as her protector could conjecture, attained her eighteenth year. The symmetry of her form might have afforded a model to the statuary; but if regularity of features is essential to beauty, this charming girl had no pretensions to the appellation. The expression of her countenance was, however, irresistible, especially when her fine eyes were lighted up with pleasure, or rendered humid by the tear of sensibility.

Her kind friends she loved with all the ardour of her nature, and when conversing with them, she displayed the energy and vigour of no common mind. Yet Mary was the simple child of nature, and when ranging about the woods and glades of Glencross, with her youthful companions, or romping on the lawn with little William, she was scarcely distinguishable

tinguishable from the common class of girls of her age.

At this period of our narrative, Mr. Ferguson had practised nearly thirty years at the Scottish bar. Some of the junior members of the faculty began to term him an old bachelor; but this cabalistic appellation had neither soured his temper, impaired his health, nor planted a wrinkle on his open manly brow.

In imparting and receiving happiness the days of this worthy man glided on in uninterrupted tranquillity. The renovation of his sister's health and spirits, the daily improvement, and warm attachment of his adopted children, the respect of friends, and the gratitude of dependents, gave a fair promise of many coming years of undisturbed enjoyment.

Fleeting and unstable, however, proved these flattering presages. A cause of great importance came on to be argued early in the sessions, and Mr. Fer-

guson was retained as leading advocate for the defendant.

The question involved the property and reputation of two ancient families, and was besides of a very perplexed and intricate nature. Not only anxious, from the importance of the case, but also from his friendship for his client, who, he conceived, had been grossly injured, our indefatigable lawyer made the most unremitting efforts to develop the truth.

For weeks previous to the first hearing of the cause, he had not only relinquished the pleasures of his domestic fireside, but even abridged the necessary hours of rest, in order to arrange and digest the multifarious mass of information which he had collected from different quarters.

In this task he was greatly assisted by Bouverie, who displayed an acuteness in detecting the weak parts of the question which gave much satisfaction to his patron.

The

The important morning at length arrived. The outer house was crowded at an early hour with most of the wealth and fashion of the northern metropolis. Mr. Ferguson entered; he saw arrayed against him all the great law luminaries of the crown, and the opponent of his client seated behind them, supported by many of the first characters, for wealth and family interest, in the country. But he saw them undismayed, for truth and justice he believed to be on his side. Unaccompanied, except by the junior advocates retained to assist him, and his young friend Bouverie, he approached his appropriate station.

The speech of the king's advocate was long and declamatory, and chiefly addressed to the feelings and prejudices of his hearers. In the heat of his oratory he let slip many things which Mr. Ferguson deemed of the utmost importance to the cause of his client, and which he carefully noted for the defence.

The

The chief witness examined by the king's advocate was an aged solicitor, who swore to having written the will, in right of which the present claimant sued for possession of the estates and other property held by the defendant, as heir-at-law to the defunct.

To show the steady determination of the testator to disinherit his nephew, the original draft of the will was produced, dated several weeks before the will itself, with interlineations, which the solicitor swore was in the handwriting of the deceased.

The cause had occupied the attention of the court for several days, and triumph sat on the brow of the adverse party, when Mr. Ferguson rose to make his defence.

He went over the chief arguments employed by the king's advocate, and commented on them with his accustomed acuteness and ingenuity. He led evidence to shew that the deceased had,

on

on his deathbed, detailed the provisions of his will to an old and intimate friend, and that they were nearly the reverse of those contained in the testament just produced.

The solicitor was again called on, and confirmed his former testimony.

Mr. Ferguson then asked him whether he had written the draft of the will, which he now held in his hand, from the verbal instructions of the defunct, or from memoranda furnished by him?

For the first time he seemed to hesitate, but recovering his assurance, at length said, it was written from the dictation of the deceased, and left with him for consideration, at his own request.

Again Mr. Ferguson interrogated, whether it was delivered to him by the deceased personally, or transmitted by post?

After another pause of hesitation, he replied that it was put into his hands, after the lapse of some weeks, by the defunct

funct himself, with orders to have it extended with all convenient dispatch.

Mr. Ferguson once more proceeded to inquire whether he saw the deceased affix his signature to the draft?

Here the king's advocate interfered, stating that the questions proposed by his learned brother were only calculated to protract the defeat of his client, for that the genuineness of the will being established, the minor question of the draft was of little importance. Yet he knew that Mr. Ferguson was no quibbler; besides, from the satisfaction portrayed on his expressive features, he was aware that he had not wholly relinquished hope, though on what his hopes were founded he had no means of conjecturing.

"Be it so," said Mr. Ferguson; "I agree with his majesty's advocate, that further interrogation would only be uselessly taking up the time of the court, and plunging this hoary-headed villain, this disgrace to his profession, still deeper in guilt.

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"My lord, you have heard this miscreant affirm that the draft I hold in my hand was written by himself from the dictation of the deceased; that it was left with him several weeks, at his own desire, for reperusal and consideration; and that, at the end of this period, it was personally delivered to him by the defunct himself, with express orders to extend it with all convenient dispatch.

"All this you have heard, my lord, and would doubtless have heard much more, but for the timely interference of the learned gentleman on the other side of the table. But, my lord, this very draft contains in itself a full and complete refutation of the whole complicated tissue of fraud and falsehood, which has been resorted to in order to rob my client of that property to which his near relationship to the deceased gave him a just and lawful title.

"Be pleased, my lord, to examine this draft," he continued, handing it up to the

the bench, "and you will observe that the paper had no existence at the time it is said to have been written."

The judge no sooner examined the water-mark, which bore a date three years later than that of the deed itself, than he instantly gave orders to take all the parties into custody, to answer for the fraud in due time and place.

In the confusion which ensued, the principal in the base confederacy effected his escape, and left the worthless tool of his crimes to suffer the penalty and ignominy of his guilt.

The king's advocate, overwhelmed with rage and mortification, threw up his brief, declaring that the mines of Peru would not have tempted him for a moment to lend his countenance to so base and iniquitous a fraud.

Many, who had before, like the priest and Levite, passed by on the other side, now pressed forward, to congratulate the triumphant litigant on the fortunate termination

mination of the affair; but, disgusted at a homage paid to his wealth which was withheld from his misfortunes, he took the arm of Mr. Ferguson, and, followed by Bouverie and the junior advocates, adjourned to Pool's hotel to dinner.

Mr. Leslie's gratitude to his indefatigable defender was heartfelt and sincere. It did not, however, abound in words, but beamed on his intelligent countenance, and spoke in the tremor and agitation of his manly voice.

"If any thanks are due for having discharged a professional duty," said the good-natured lawyer, "to my good friend here," pointing to Bouverie, "they are solely due; since, during the proceedings of yesterday, when I began to despair of extracting truth from those whose character and even life depended on its suppression, Bouverie, suspecting, from the officiousness with which the draft was obtruded on the notice of the court, that it was a forgery, set himself to

to examine and compare the signature with some specimens of the handwriting of your uncle lying on the table. In the progress of this investigation, he discovered the date of the water-mark, but, with the coolness of a veteran practitioner at the bar, suppressed his delight till the breaking up of the court. I would, on the following morning, have at once terminated the proceedings; but I was desirous, from strictly cross-questioning the hoary brother of our trade, to render our triumph, and the infamy of our opponents, more complete and striking."

Pained to listen to his own praises, Bouverie had left the room, and Mr. Ferguson continued—"I have now entered the autumn of my days, and know not how soon they may set in everlasting night. Should this worthy youth ever want a friend, remember, Leslie, the zeal he so successfully exerted in your cause, and be to him the guiding star in his

his struggles for professional pre-eminence."

Affected by his earnestness, Leslie solemnly pledged himself to watch over the fortunes of his youthful saviour, as he justly termed Bouverie, should cruel fate deprive him of his best and dearest friend.

During dinner Mr. Ferguson remained silent and abstracted. He ate little, and complained of fatigue. He took leave of his friends at an unusually early hour, and having partaken of coffee with his family, retired, at his sister's solicitation, to court that repose of which he stood so much in need.

Next morning, at breakfast, lady Frazer was greatly alarmed at her brother's altered appearance; but he smiled at her terrors, merely saying that he had got a severe cold, which he trusted would speedily subside.

The chariot was ordered; but before it came round to the door, he found himself

self unable to go abroad, and was forced to retire to bed. His medical friends flocked round him; and if anxiety or skill could have availed, Mr. Ferguson had still lived.

After six weeks of the most agonizing suspense, the patient again left his bed; but though the fever with which he was at first affected had wholly subsided, he was so enfeebled as to afford but very slender hopes of recovery.

During the violence of his complaint, Bouverie had never for a moment left his bedside. Stretched on a couch, without undressing, he occasionally snatched a few moments' repose; but so intense was his anxiety, that the slightest movement of the patient immediately aroused him from his slumber.

The gentle, the affectionate Mary shared in his anxiety and his cares. No hireling nurse was suffered to intrude into the sick chamber. The hand of friendship and sisterly affection smooth-

ed

ed the pillow and administered to the wants of the suffering invalid. Even William suppressed his tears, lest the violence of his grief should disturb his beloved uncle.

The hope which illuminated the countenances of his attached friends, when he was again able to leave his bed for a short time, was painful to the heart of this benevolent man; for his internal feelings assured him that his complete recovery was an event not to be expected.

CHAP-

CHAPTER IX.

"Now spring returns, but not to me returns;
— — — — —
Dim in my breast life's dying taper burns."
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Oh, if a ray of heaven descends on earth,
'Tis when, in spring of life, love's kindling flame
Refines the virtues as it gives them birth,
Exalting and ennobling every aim,
Making, by kindly glow, two souls the same. CONA.

As spring advanced, Mr. Ferguson expressed great anxiety to leave the noise and bustle of the crowded city for the calm retirement of Glencross Cottage. His wishes were immediately complied with; and attended by a medical friend and his sister, he set out for his favourite retreat, preceded by the junior members of his family.

Bouverie and Mary had, in conjunction,

tion with Mrs. Saunderson, prepared every thing for the reception and comfort of the venerated invalid; but the hour had long passed at which they calculated he would arrive, and anxiously they watched for the appearance of the carriage. Another hour however glided away, and unable longer to control their terrors, lest the patient had sunk under the fatigue of the journey, they proceeded along the road leading to Edinburgh, in the hope of descrying the distant approach of their friends.

The strong tie of suffering had bound their young hearts more closely together than before; yet Bouverie never mentioned his love. His delicate attentions, however, and the anxiety with which he hovered round the object of his affection, betrayed the state of his heart to all but the unconscious object of his attachment; while Mary, on her part, termed the regard she cherished for the highly-prized youth sisterly affection.

Arm in arm, they continued to walk forward in melancholy silence for nearly a mile, till reaching a knoll, shaded by a few solitary birch-trees, and which commanded a view of the road as far as the eye could reach, they seated themselves to watch the approach of their friends.

Buried in a melancholy reverie, Mary's head sunk on her bosom, and tears of bitterness flowed from her eyes. Bouverie, affected by her tears, took her hand, and endeavoured to inspire her with a hope that was a stranger to his own bosom; but his soothings only redoubled her anguish.

"Blessed with affectionate parents and tender relatives," she said, "you cannot conceive the powerful ties by which I am bound to my first and only friend. Deserted by the authors of my being, his benevolence saved me from a life of ignorance and penury—nay, perhaps, of guilt. With unwearied assiduity he conducted me in the path of knowledge and

and virtue; his smile rewarded my exertions—his gentle reproof checked the wanderings of my inexperience. He was the prop and stay of my life; and deprived of him, I must remain an isolated being, cut off from all the tender charities of life, and sink at last unlamented to the grave."

"Say not so, my beloved Mary!" exclaimed the ardent youth, snatching her to his throbbing bosom, "long have you been dearer to me than life itself; tell me then, that at a more auspicious moment you will confer on your grateful Bouverie a right to call you all his own."

The head of Mary sunk on the shoulder of her lover; a crowd of confused ideas rushed to her mind, and she remained silent.

"Speak to me," he said; "tell me that habit or association, or what you will, has rendered me necessary to your happiness, and I will patiently, and in silence, wait till a gleam of sunshine

breaks through the gloom which at present surrounds us."

Gladly would Mary have spoken, but utterance was denied her. At length, after a solemn pause, she raised her humid eyes to the face of her lover—"Why, oh why," she said, "have you raised, and at such a moment, the veil that has hitherto shrouded the true nature of an affection which made me forget that we were not twin-born, the offspring of the same parents? But hear me, Bouverie," she continued, while her animated features assumed an expression of self-conquering resolution; "though you have awakened a new and powerful feeling in my bosom, no selfish consideration shall tempt me to mar your rising prospects, by entangling your fate with that of a nameless deserted being. I know all your generous nature would urge on this subject; but I also know the hopes which my revered protector has formed of your future utility

lity and eminence in your profession; nor could I enjoy a moment's peace were these hopes disappointed through my means."

Bouverie pressed the lovely speaker closer to his heart; assured of her affection, he entertained no other fears. He could not for a moment believe that the liberal mind of his parents would shrink from receiving the amiable Mary as a daughter, merely because her birth was involved in obscurity.

Mr. Ferguson, he was convinced, more than suspected the cherished secret of his soul, and had rather encouraged than repressed his attention to his favourite; but in the midst of these delightful reveries, the image of this revered friend arose to his imagination, and checked every feeling connected with self.

At this moment the carriage appeared in sight, and the youthful pair hastened to meet their suffering benefactor.

The heavy eyes of the exhausted invalid were lighted up with a beam of pleasure as he beheld the approach of his young friends, who, on their part, rejoiced to hear that he had borne the fatigue of the journey much better than had been anticipated.

On reaching the cottage, he was carefully lifted from the carriage, and placed in bed. Bouverie resumed his usual station by his side; but not, as heretofore, was his watching cheered by the presence of Mary. Her retiring modesty made her shrink from meeting her lover alone, and she remained with lady Frazer and the physician in the parlour.

Mr. Ferguson awoke greatly refreshed from a short slumber, and insisted that Bouverie should join the family below at dinner—"I will then permit you to return," he said, with a benignant smile; "and should I feel myself no worse, you shall assist me to my dressing-room, where

where you shall all assemble to drink your coffee."

Bouverie hastened to cheer the disconsolate lady Frazer with this favourable account, and forced himself into conversation with the physician.

Mary left the parlour shortly after his entrance, and glided softly into the sick chamber.

"Why have you so long absented yourself, my gentle nurse?" said her kind protector, as she knelt by his bedside.

Not one idea had ever arisen in the pure mind of the gentle girl that she would have wished concealed from the knowledge of her truest and best friend. But now this simple question agitated her bosom with a contrariety of feelings, which displayed themselves on her speaking features, and she remained silent and embarrassed.

Mr. Ferguson partly surmised the cause—aware that when the heart is soft-

ened by affliction, it is prone to overflow in tenderness towards a beloved object. With a delicacy and knowledge of the human heart peculiar to himself, he drew from the blushing Mary the secret of her youthful attachment, and the heroic resolution she had formed to resist the fond pleadings of her ardent admirer.

"Go, my sweet girl," he said, "and compose your agitated spirits. I have long anticipated this mutual attachment between my favourites, with no small degree of satisfaction; I also know the sentiments of Bouverie's parents on the subject, or, believe me, I would never have exposed his youth to the enchantments of my Circe."

Mary retired with a heart lightened of half its cares, and, but for the precarious state of her adored benefactor, would have felt herself the most blessed of human beings.—"Yet why should I selfishly confine my happiness to my own bosom?" thought she, and flew to impart to Bouverie

verie the warm interest Mr. Ferguson had expressed in their mutual happiness.

She sought him in their usual haunts, in the garden, in the shrubbery, and in their favourite dell; but disappointed in her search, she returned to the house.

She found him seated in the parlour, languid and abstracted, mechanically attempting something like conversation with the physician; for lady Frazer had retired to court a few moments' repose, after the anxiety and fatigues of the morning.

Exercise had imparted a glow to the cheeks, and animated the fine eyes of Mary; the communication which hung on her lips was restrained by the presence of a third person; but the timid glance she threw on her lover thrilled to his heart, and spoke to him of hope.

Again her attention to the invalid called Marv from the parlour; and while she was administering him his soup, Bouverie entered the sick chamber. Pi-

tying the confusion of his lovely niece, Mr. Ferguson requested him to take her place, and, glad to be relieved, the agitated girl fled to the solitude of her own chamber.

The servant had no sooner withdrawn with the tray, than Mr. Ferguson, good-naturedly, entered on the subject which he knew was uppermost in the mind of the youth.

Bouverie hung his head abashed, when he found that his venerated friend was informed of the declaration he had made to his youthful ward; and that, too, at a time when this best of men was hovering on the confines of the grave.—"Ungrateful being that I was, to dream of ought appertaining to self when the fate of my more than parent hung in awful uncertainty!" thought the disconcerted youth, as in silence he grasped the hand of his benefactor. "I have done wrong, sir," he said, when his feelings allowed of utterance, "and must appear a monster

ster of ingratitude in your eyes. But indeed the fault was unpremeditated. Alone with the lovely girl, and endeavouring to sooth her terrors on your account, my long-cherished secret burst through all restraint."

"My young friend," said the worthy advocate, "why attempt to excuse an avowal so natural under the circumstances in which you were placed? I have long seen and approved your attachment to my adopted daughter; but without name and lineage, I knew not whether my darling girl, rich in worth, beauty, and a decent independence, might meet the approbation of your parents, amiable as I knew them to be; for who can set limits to the force of early prejudice? My suspicions, however, wronged them; for although family and fortune were by no means weightless in the balance, yet the moral virtues and amiable qualities of a daughter-in-law were, in their estimation, much superior considerations.

No obstacle, therefore, remains to oppose your union with the lovely maid, except those which honour and prudence enjoin. Believe me, I speak the language of experience when I tell you, that years of indefatigable perseverance and study are still requisite before you can expect to attain that eminence in your profession which will secure to you wealth and independence; and till that is attained, the cares of a family would only hang like a millstone round your neck, impeding all your exertions. I had indeed hoped to have smoothed your approach to the temple of fame and fortune; but I find this cannot be; yet, I trust, my dear boy, with the foundation I have laid, and the bright reward you have in view, that a few short years of self-denial will be rewarded by a long life of undiminished happiness." Seeing Bouverie unable to reply—"Go, my young friend," he continued, "and perform the office of my substitute at the dinner-table.

table. I require a long rest after this exertion; in two hours return and assist me to reach my dressing-room."

The youth, glad of the permission, wrung the hand of his best friend, and hastily left the apartment. The dinner was announced just as he entered the parlour; but as the physician took the hand of lady Frazer to lead her to the dining-room, Bouverie lingered a few moments behind with his fair companion, to whom he whispered his unbounded joy that no obstacle remained to their attachment. Mary gave him one of her sweetest smiles, and hurried after her ladyship.

Dinner passed over in almost total silence, except what the mere forms of politeness required.

Lady Frazer's anxiety for her brother unfitted her for conversation; the physician was habitually abstracted, except when roused by argument; and the youthful lovers absorbed in that sweet

delirium

delirium of the soul which excludes all participation in external objects.

For some months a gradual improvement appeared to take place in Mr. Ferguson's health, to the great joy of his sister, and his young and grateful friends.

William Frazer remained at the high school, and Bouverie again left the solitude of the Cottage for Edinburgh, where he pursued his studies with a diligence highly gratifying to his benefactor. In a few months he would attain that age at which he could be admitted to the bar; and Mr. Ferguson was so fully assured of his proficiency in legal knowledge, that he determined not to wait beyond the prescribed term.

The autumn, however, set in cold and rainy, which prevented the invalid from taking his usual exercise in a carriage; and in a few weeks all his dangerous symptoms returned with considerable aggravation.

Again Bouverie left his studies for the sick

sick chamber, endeavouring to beguile the tedious hours of illness by all the tender attentions of the most sincere affection. For hours together he sat by the couch of his suffering friend; he read to him, conversed with him; administered to him his medicines, and what nourishment he could receive; watched by him while he slept, and tenderly supported him to his dressing-room when he found himself equal to the exertion.

These unwearied attentions were received by the amiable invalid with the warmest gratitude. He never displayed that selfishness which too frequently characterizes disease, nor by querulous and captious complaining, rendered the task of attendance irksome. On the contrary, he delighted to see around him cheerful faces, and to aid, as far as his weakness would allow, every little scheme of amusement which tended to render the confinement of a sick room less sombre and gloomy.

The

The conversation of a few select and enlightened friends always afforded the purest enjoyment to the invalid; but when weakness prevented him from indulging in this pleasure, he would, while reclining on a couch, listen delighted to the fine tones of Mary's enchanting voice, as she warbled the sweet airs of his native country, or accompanied Bouverie in some of the simple duets characteristic of the pastoral manners of Scotland.

With silent, deep-felt sorrow, lady Frazer watched the progressive decline of her inestimable brother. The cheerful tones of his voice, and the uncomplaining fortitude with which he suffered, though it deceived his young friends into a belief that his disease was unattended with danger, could not conceal from his anxious sister that he was fast hastening to the grave.

While her ladyship gazed on his bright flashing eye, on the alternate flush and deadly paleness of his cheek; when she viewed

viewed the attenuated form of this beloved brother, the extreme debility of his frame, and the tremor which shook every nerve on the slightest exertion, she felt convinced that their eternal parting would not indeed be long delayed; and while she endeavoured to appear cheerful in the presence of the invalid, her heart bled at every pore.

The same conviction was still more forcibly felt by the patient himself. To his well-regulated and firm mind, the slow approaches of death had no terrors; but when he reflected on the unprotected state of his sister and her boy, and that the forbearance of sir Simon Frazer was in a great measure imputable to their being under the protection of his roof, he shuddered to contemplate the misery that might yet be in store for his luckless wife.

But Mr. Ferguson resembled not the foolish virgins in the scripture; he was never unprovided with oil for his lamp.

All

All that human foresight could do, had long been done by him to protect poor Marion from ever again falling under the power of her unworthy husband.

His immense property was secured for the separate and sole use of his sister; a liberal provision was made for his two favourites; and a decent independence secured to his aged and faithful domestics. Numerous were the bequests to his old and respected friends, and his professional works were left to Bouverie.

Lord William Frazer, captain Malcolm Fraser, and Bouverie, were constituted his executors, with a solemn and affecting adjuration to protect his sister and her child from the machinations of the despicable baronet.

Not a moment had been lost by Mr. Ferguson in making these arrangements, after he became acquainted with the turpitude of sir Simon Fraser's character. But though satisfied nothing had been left undone that had the least tendency

to

to add to the independence and comfort of Marion, he no sooner perceived him and approaching, than he became anxious to converse with captain Frazer, and also to obtain for his sister the support of Mrs. Frazer's presence in the trying scene, in which he was persuaded she must, at no very distant period, become an actor.

With this view he wrote to the north, stating his rapidly-declining health, and warmly soliciting a visit from his friends. Mrs. Frazer had now an excellent substitute in the gentle Emily, to whose care she could with the utmost confidence commit her youngest darling. Having therefore entreated her to apply to Mr. Glen and his venerable mother for advice under any difficulty, she took an affectionate leave of her and the child, and instantly proceeded, with her husband, on their way to the south.

Anxious to relieve the mind of their best friend, they hastened forward with the

the utmost speed, and in not much longer time than it would have required to forward a letter, arrived in safety at Glencross Cottage.

With one of his most benignant smiles, Mr. Ferguson greeted this truly-respectable couple, whose appearance was unexpected by all save himself.

Bouverie, seated by the side of his couch, was supporting the patient in a half-recumbent posture; whilst the blooming Mary was hanging over him with a bason of soup in her hand. The pleased expression of his countenance caused his affectionate attendants to turn their heads towards the door, when they beheld, with the utmost astonishment, the unlooked-for entrance of the travellers.

"This haste was indeed considerate, my dear madam," said the patient, as he held out his hand to Mrs. Frazer; "I did not flatter myself with your appearance for at least a week to come."

The

The tears that rushed to the manly eyes of Bouverie, and the quivering lip and agitated frame of Mary, evinced that they comprehended too plainly the melancholy cause of this visit.

Willing to relieve their agitation, the patient continued—"I wished to confer on my kind attendants here an agreeable surprise, but their wo-fraught features display not the delight I expected to witness on the occasion. Go, my beloved children, and prepare Marion for the sight of her friends, lest she be more powerfully affected than even you yourselves have been."

Mary was alternately pressed to the heart of her future parents, and saluted by the name of their daughter. When freed from their embrace, she hastened with Bouverie in search of lady Frazer, whom they found in the garden, overwhelmed with the deepest affliction. Cautiously they imparted to her the arrival of her friends—intelligence which conveyed

conveyed to her mind the first alleviating feeling she had experienced for many a wearisome day.

CHAP.

CHAPTER X.

'Oh, why has worth so short a date,
While villains ripen grey with time?
Must thou, the noble, generous, great,
Fall in bold manhood's hardy prime?

'BURNS.

THOUGH prepared to behold Mr. Ferguson greatly changed, captain and Mrs. Frazer had pictured in their imagination something far less dismal than the reality. When, therefore, they gazed on the emaciated form and wan visage of the best benefactor of their children, it required all the fortitude they possessed to restrain their grief within their own bosoms. The calm fortitude with which the invalid entreated them to spare his afflicted sister every unnecessary pang, recalled,

recalled, however, the firmness of Mrs. Frazer, and she proceeded to meet the afflicted Marion with a smiling countenance, far different from her real feelings.

No sooner had she left the apartment than Mr. Ferguson informed captain Frazer more fully of his motives for requesting his presence and that of his valuable companion.—"Time stands not still at our bidding," he continued; "and if I conjecture rightly, I have not much to spare. To-morrow morning, therefore, I must entreat your attention for a short period to business; but let the remainder of this day be devoted to the delights of friendship and affection. I am fatigued, my dear sir; will you therefore ring for my nurse."

The captain obeyed, and Bouverie almost immediately entered the apartment; with the tenderest care he administered the cordial draught to the invalid, arranged his couch, placed him in a more convenient

convenient position, and taking up a book, resumed his station by his side.

"Not now, Bouverie," said the patient. "Go, my dear boy, and be happy with your parents; I feel disposed to sleep, and will ring when I again require your assistance."

Captain Frazer's eyes glistened with parental pride as he followed the fine manly form of his son engaged in soothing the infirmities of his more than father; while he became convinced that his talents and virtues must be of no ordinary cast, to have created for him such a warm interest in the bosom of one so highly gifted as Mr. Ferguson.

Emily Frazer had not the cruelty to flatter her friend with hopes that she was too surely convinced would prove fallacious; but she exerted all her powers to fortify her mind to sustain the severe trial that awaited her.

She did not indeed directly mention the subject, and far less deal out those

trite consolatory aphorisms which flow glibly from the tongue of the prosperous and happy, but which only add a keener pang to the lacerated heart. On the contrary, she gently led her thoughts to dwell on the improvement and future prospects of her William, to interest her in the culture of his heart, and the more perfect development of his moral and social feelings, which are too often obtunded, or perverted by the indiscriminate intercourse which takes place in a public school.

It is true, the image of her brother suffering and dying commingled with all her thoughts; but when associated with other objects of powerful interest, it produced not that enervating despair into which she was fast sinking, before the arrival of her highly-respected friends.

The evening was spent in the dressing-room of the invalid, who essayed all his powers to make the time pass cheerfully

fully away. Being Saturday, William arrived just as the party sat down to coffee. The affectionate boy hovered round the couch of his uncle; and having, as usual, answered his kind inquiries, and related his little adventures, he presented his daily tasks for inspection.

Mr. Ferguson pressed his lips to the blooming cheek of his beloved nephew, telling him that he had deputed Bouverie, in future, to overlook his lessons, and report to him the progress he made, as he wished to enjoy as much as possible of his friends' company during their short visit.

The tear which, unobserved by all except captain Frazer, stole down the cheek of the patient, clearly displayed to him that the substitution in this case was benevolently intended, gradually to weaken the dependence of William on himself, before the tie which bound them together should be forcibly snapped by the inexorable hand of death.

The friends separated at an early hour, and Bouverie threw himself on his pallet by the bedside of his benefactor. Mr. Ferguson soon sunk into a calm undisturbed sleep; not so his attentive companion. He thought with delight of the approbation with which his parents regarded his beloved Mary, and the ardent affection which the gentle girl evinced towards them in return. But while he rejoiced in his own happy prospects, his heart bled for the sufferings of those most dear to him. Not a selfish feeling mingled with his grief; nor did the incalculable loss he would himself sustain by the deprivation of Mr. Ferguson's countenance and interest on commencing his professional career, for a moment cross his thoughts.

At length he sunk into a profound slumber, to dream of days of happiness with those he loved. From this delightful vision he was awakened by the soft voice

voice of Mary inquiring at the door of the chamber after the precious invalid.

Hastily leaving his couch, he gently opened the door, and pressing the fair hand she extended to his lips, he gladdened her heart by the favourable account he had to give of the patient.

Since Mr. Ferguson's illness lady Frazer and Mary had occupied a small closet adjoining his bedchamber, in order to be at hand should any unfavourable change take place during the night. When restless or perturbed in his sleep, the grateful girl frequently stole from her bed, to share with her lover in the task of soothing the distress, or administering to the wants of her almost-worshipped benefactor. Thus partaking in the labour of gratitude and affection, the ties which united them were daily strengthened and sublimed to more than earthly purity. The same feelings seemed to animate the mind of each; if Bou-

verie was sad, a cloud of sorrow instantly overshadowed the fine features of Mary; if a smile of pleasure lighted up his speaking countenance, hers quickly displayed an expression of gladness.

In the morning Mr. Ferguson awoke, greatly refreshed by the longest and most tranquil sleep he had enjoyed for many weeks. After breakfast he requested Bouverie to entertain the ladies, as he wished to have a short conversation with captain Frazer.

The youth immediately descended to the parlour, and communicated this desire to his father, who repaired to the chamber of the invalid.

In a clear and succinct manner, he communicated to his friend the state and amount of his property, from an inventory written in his own hand; he presented for his perusal the document by which sir Simon Frazer had committed his wife and son to his charge, and informed

formed him that he had assigned that sacred trust to himself, lord William Frazer, and Bouverie.

As that nobleman, however, had again departed in search of that health and peace which the loss of his son had irrevocably destroyed, with the intention of remaining abroad for two years, Mr. Ferguson added that he had prepared a codicil to his will, joining an old friend, solicitor Murray, in the trust, with the twofold design of sparing Bouverie's delicacy, and aiding him by his extensive legal experience, should his unworthy brother-in-law endeavour to molest or persecute his hapless wife.

He next made him acquainted with the contents of his will, by which his valuable possessions were bequeathed for the sole and separate use of his sister, burdened with a legacy to Bouverie, Mary, and William Frazer, of three thousand pounds each. Comfortable annuities were secured to his two old do-

mestics, Mrs. Saunderson and John Brown, a handsome provision to lady Frazer's Robert, and a gratuity to his other servants. Five hundred pounds were to be paid to each of his executors, and many gifts of remembrance to several old and valued friends, among whom Mrs. Frazer and her two daughters were not forgotten.

Glencross Cottage, and the adjoining grounds, were to become the joint property of Bouverie and Mary, on the death of lady Frazer.

"In this will," he continued, "I have endeavoured, as far as human foresight can direct me, to secure peace and independence to those beings who have constituted the charm and solace of my existence. In leaving my sister sole and uncontrolled possessor of my large property, I was actuated by two motives. Acquainted with the mean and avaricious soul of her despicable husband, I was aware that he would less readily interfere

fere in the education of her boy, when he knew that with her rested the power of enriching him with wealth more than double that of his paternal inheritance. Besides, at the time, an indistinct vision of future happiness for my beloved sister floated across my imagination. Should her present galling chains be dissevered, hope whispered in my ear, Marion might yet enjoy that domestic happiness of which she is so devoted a worshipper, and have other dear claimants to share her wealth with her darling William.

"In the provision for my favourites, I have secured to them a moderate independence, without destroying the necessity of exertion in the young advocate; and should success not ultimately crown his endeavours, this favourite retreat will afford a comfortable asylum for their declining years. Of my other bequests I say nothing; they were dictated by a

love of justice, and a wish to evince my sense of the friendship of those worthy characters whose esteem enhanced the pleasures of many a social hour. You will, I am afraid, find the task I have assigned you both difficult and irksome; for I expect you will experience much molestation from the baronet. My sister's shrinking delicacy, and her well-founded dread of being compelled to relinquish her darling son, alone prevented me from legally freeing her from the power of her unworthy husband; but in this parcel you will find the proofs of his base attempt upon the innocent Mary. I know his cowardly soul dreads a public exposure; and, with such documents in your possession, I trust you may preserve his boy to comfort the wounded heart of his amiable mother."

Captain Frazer listened to the dying injunctions of Mr. Ferguson in profound silence. When he ceased speaking, he wrung

wrung his hand, and solemnly promised to shield his sister from the persecution of his despicable kinsman.

"I am satisfied," said the exhausted patient; "I could have wished that lord William Frazer had been present, to aid you with his influence, but I feel that to be impossible. Long before his return," he added, with a placid smile, "I shall be as if I had never been."

Captain Frazer, at his request, replaced the important papers in an ebony cabinet, which occupied a corner of the apartment, and restored the key to his friend.

While thus engaged, a servant entered with refreshments; and the patient having swallowed a little soup, composed himself for repose. Captain Frazer did not immediately return to the parlour, but retired to the garden to compose his agitated feelings. Unconsciously he entered the shrubbery, and wandered forth into a little wood skirting

the public road. He was recalled to a sense of surrounding objects by the voice of some person near him, saying—"The sooner you set off the better; for, depend on it, he wont outlive the month."

Startled by the voice, but more so by the import of the words, captain Frazer leapt over the fence, just in time to see a horseman pass him at full gallop, and the servant he had left in Mr. Ferguson's chamber hastily retreat towards the house. The circumstance appeared to him rather singular at the time, but in a few hours it was wholly forgotten.

From this day forward the invalid never alluded to business of any kind whatever; his only enjoyment consisted in seeing his friends assembled around his couch. Once, and once only, when left alone with captain Frazer, he said, after a short silence—"I could have wished to have seen my Mary under the protection of Bouverie, but the wish is futile. Promise me, therefore, my friend, that you

and

and your excellent lady will cherish her with the same care as if she was already your daughter."

"Our hearts make no difference between her and our own children," rejoined this excellent man, "and rest satisfied no evil shall approach her which it is in our power to ward off."

The powers of Mr. Ferguson's mind did not appear to decline with the increasing weakness of his body; for never was his conversation more entertaining, or the coruscations of his wit more brilliant, than on that evening which closed upon all his earthly prospects for ever.

Words are inadequate to paint the grief of his surviving friends, or the agony of his desolate and bereaved sister. For several hours she remained insensible to all around her, and, but for her low breathing, appeared equally inanimate as the remains of her beloved brother.

Her

Her attached friends suppressed their own sorrow to watch over the afflicted mourner, and, towards morning, had the satisfaction to see her somewhat revived.

CHAP.

CHAPTER XI.

"Who the hurried throb shall speak,
The deeper anguish of despair,
As frantically she kiss'd the cheek,
That knew not that the lips were there?"

As soon as composure began to be partly restored, captain Frazer dispatched an express to Edinburgh, to inform Mr. Murray of the death of his friend, and to request his presence at the Cottage. The worthy solicitor was not slow in obeying the summons, and, on his arrival, took the proper legal steps of causing the different repositories, &c. of the deceased to be sealed up.

He afterwards returned to town to give the necessary directions for the funeral, promising to return on the following morning, and bring William Frazer along

along with him, in the hope that the sight of her boy would have a tendency to arouse Marion from the stupor of grief into which she had fallen.

At a late hour Mrs. Frazer prevailed on the weeping Mary to retire to her chamber, and endeavour to obtain some repose, declaring her intention of watching by the bedside of lady Frazer throughout the night.

Bouverie and his father were induced to follow her example; and soon after an unbroken stillness reigned in every corner of the mansion.

Exhausted and heart-stricken, Mary threw herself on her bed; but to sleep was impossible. After a time, however, she fell into a disturbed dose, from which she was roused by the sound of footsteps proceeding cautiously along the passage. This circumstance, unimportant in itself, produced a kind of terror in her mind, previously weakened by watching and grief, and, springing from her

her bed, she hastily opened the door of her chamber; but all was now still.

Smiling at her own weakness, the sorrowing girl again sought her bed, being unable, from a violent headache, to remain in an upright position. Once more she closed her eyes in sleep; but a painful sense of suffocation made her spring from her uneasy couch; and throwing on a shawl, she descended to the garden, to seek relief in the open air.

On leaving her apartment, a sulphurous smell, issuing from the chamber of death, accounted for the sensation she had experienced; but supposing it to originate in some fumigating materials which, she understood, had been placed there the evening before, she proceeded onwards, without farther attending to the circumstance.

As she reached the garden, the sun had not yet dissipated the dense vapours which enveloped the neighbouring hills,

and

and hovered, like soft fleecy clouds, in the intermediate valleys. The dew still sparkled on the surrounding foliage; the air was mild, and the feathered songsters warbled their sweet notes in the grove. What a contrast did the desolate bosom of Mary oppose to those smiling images of nature! In the first bitterness of grief life appeared to her a dreary blank—the consolations of friendship, the endearments of affection, were all disregarded; her interest in the present scene of things was shaken, and leaning against a stunted oak, she bowed her head, and wept bitterly.

From this paroxysm of sorrow she was roused by a hand being gently placed on her shoulder, and turning round, was affectionately pressed to the bosom of her lover, whose tears mingled with hers.

After a time given to the indulgence of a sorrow so natural, Bouverie gently drew

drew the agitated girl to a shady arbour, and endeavoured to whisper consolation to her wounded spirit.

Grateful for his kindness, she endeavoured to dry her tears, and at least assume an appearance of resignation; and even this praiseworthy effort afforded some relief to the anguish of despair.

Together they returned to the house, and joined their parents in the breakfast-parlour. Captain Frazer pressed the hand of the lovely mourner in silence, and led her to a seat beside his Emily. The suppressed sorrow visible in the countenance of the dignified matron afforded an additional motive to the gentle girl to struggle with her feelings.

The breakfast passed in almost total silence, after which the ladies retired to the chamber of the interesting Marion. At the sight of her pallid countenance, the tears of Mary flowed afresh; but a look from Mrs. Frazer reminded her of the

the cruelty of adding to the affliction of her already overburdened friend.

Lady Frazer threw her arms around the neck of the interesting girl, and sobbed aloud. She strove to speak, but the accents died on her lips, and her eloquent features evinced such deep and heartfelt agony, that every feeling of her young friend was absorbed in pity for her sufferings.

Time, which to the unhappy seems to lag in his course, at length brought evening in his train; and with the close of day Mr. Murray and William made their appearance. The sight of her boy was a new trial to lady Frazer; she pressed him to her heart, and wept over him with uncontrollable agony.

William sincerely mourned the loss of his uncle, who had been the companion of his sports, and the guide and director of his studies. But the sight of his suffering mother made him, young

as

as he was, suppress his own sorrow, from a dread of augmenting hers.

At an early hour of the evening Marion insisted that Mrs. Frazer should retire to rest, saying that Mary would share her bed, as she had done for some time past. At the still hour of midnight, Marion, leaning on the arm of her young friend, proceeded to the chamber of death.

The key remained in the lock, and cautiously unclosing the door, she approached the bed where rested the remains of her revered brother. In an agony of grief she sunk by the side of the couch; with a trembling hand she raised the covering which shaded his hallowed features, and bedewed them with her tears. A smile still lingered on his face, "like the beam of a sun that had set." Words cannot describe the feelings of the bereaved sister at this moment; it seemed as if her last tie to existence had been dissevered, and cover-

ing

ing her face, she resigned herself to all the agony of despair.

After the first bitterness of grief was past, a pensive melancholy began to shed itself over her spirits.—"Not long," thought she, "and in the silence of the tomb I also will find rest."

The convulsive sobs of her companion roused lady Frazer from this selfish indulgence of her feelings. Mary was a sacred deposit, left to her care by him she mourned. She arose, and approached her fellow-sufferer, who, with her head leaning against one of the bedposts for support, was pale as the sheeted dead. She pressed her lips to the forehead of the suffering girl, on which stood the big drops of agony, and casting one agonizing look towards the inanimate form of a brother who in life she so fondly regarded, left the apartment with her weeping companion.

Marion seemed to derive an unspeakable comfort from having offered this

last

last tribute of affection to the revered dead. Dejection sat on her brow, and the tears of agony frequently coursed each other down her cheeks; but she struggled to obtain that outward composure which she felt would be required in the trying scenes she had yet to encounter.

A week crept on, and brought the morning of that day which was to consign to the tomb all that remained of that brother who had cherished her infancy, instructed her ripening years, and shielded her when sinking under domestic calamity.

At her own request she was left alone during several hours, and when she again entered the parlour, arrayed in the habiliments of woe, there was a settled deep-rooted sorrow portrayed in her countenance, which alarmed her anxious friends more than the most bitter complaining would have done.

Marion

Marion had expressed a horror at the practice, which at this period was fast gaining ground among the higher ranks in Scotland, of consigning the ashes of a departed relative to the rude unhallowed hands of a hireling undertaker.

Leaning on the supporting arm of captain Frazer, she therefore proceeded to the chamber of the deceased, to be present at that last act of respect which custom authorises females to witness. With a dry eye, but a bursting heart, she saw the inanimate body of her brother reverently placed in his last narrow house by the hands of friendship; but who can describe the pang which shot through her heart, as the lid was placed on the coffin, and the screwing of the nails grated harshly on her ear! The audible sobs of Mary and her son were unheeded, and she continued standing at the head of the bier, the mute image of despair.

Captain

Captain Frazer gently drew the fair mourner from the melancholy object which rivetted all her faculties, and followed by her sorrowing friends, they retraced their steps to the parlour.

Carriages now began to arrive with the friends of the deceased, many of whom voluntarily hastened to bestow this final mark of respect on one who, through life, had been highly revered by all who had the pleasure of his acquaintance.

The ladies retired to the solitude of Marion's dressing-room, who intensely listened to every passing sound. As the receding noise of the hearse, which bore from his late cheerful mansion the insensible remains of him who, through life, had been her guide and support, human nature could bear no more. Surrounding objects swam before her dizzy sight, the floor seemed to sink under her, and she fell senseless into the arms of Mrs. Frazer.

Aroused from the stupor of grief, Mary flew and procured water, with which she sprinkled the burning temples of her suffering friend, who in a few minutes unclosed her heavy eyes.

Mrs. Frazer gently raising her up, led her to an open window; the fresh air gradually revived her, and at the persuasion of her friend she retired to her chamber, to endeavour to obtain a few hours repose.

About two o'clock the cavalcade left the Cottage, and as it proceeded to the last resting-place of mortality, the sorrows of his tenants and dependants, the tears of the poor, and the silent but heartfelt regret of his attached friends, spoke the best eulogium on the virtues of the departed.

When the procession reached a rustic avenue, leading between two rows of intermingled yew and fir-trees, to the village churchyard, the coffin was removed from the hearse, and being rested on handspokes,

handspikes, was borne forward to the grave by his sorrowing friends, the head being supported by his youthful nephew; on the right-hand of William walked captain Frazer, and on his left the disconsolate Bouverie.

As they slowly moved along, a tall figure, habited in deep mourning, approached the side of captain Frazer, who, absorbed in melancholy ruminations, walked with his eyes fixed on the ground, unobservant of passing objects.

A halt in the procession, when they reached the churchyard gate, caused the captain to raise his head; and he gave a start of recognition on beholding sir Simon Frazer. In silence he fell back a few paces, and with his hand motioned him to take the place of chief mourner, which he himself had before occupied.

In a few minutes they reached the grave, and the coffin was lowered to its last dreary mansion, amidst the silent

but deep-felt regret of a numerous circle of sorrowing friends.

The simple government and ritual of the Presbyterian church admit not of that remnant of Popish superstition, the reading of prayers over the dead; yet to those who have witnessed the vacant indifferent look, or studied ceremonious grimace with which the oft-repeated prayer is listened to, must confess that it affords a far less impressive lesson to the bystander, than that deep and solemn abstraction, that suspension of all earthly feeling, that looking towards futurity, which characterize the attendants on a Scottish funeral.

Awe-struck by the solemnity of the scene, even the youthful William stifled his sobs, and in silence turned from the grave of his departed uncle. For the first time he beheld his father; and his quivering lip, and the agitation of his countenance, betrayed the unpleasant feelings

feelings which his presence occasioned in the bosom of his son.

Three months before the death of Mr. Ferguson, he had held a long and confidential conversation with his young nephew, on the subject of the unhappy estrangement of his father. He was aware that youth, in general, is more observant in such matters than is usually supposed; and he preferred communicating to him the tacit separation between his parents, to leaving his mind to roam in the wide field of conjecture.

While the youthful cheek of William burned with shame, and his bosom heaved with indignation at his mother's wrongs, the worthy advocate bade him remember, that these wrongs were inflicted by the Author of his being, and that any direct interference on his part would tend only to aggravate, not to heal, the wounds in the bosom of his mother.

He

He entreated him to become the comforter and supporter of that mother, and never to forget the tender relationship in which he stood towards her; at the same time that he paid every proper deference to the *reasonable commands* of his father.

With the disposition of his property he made him acquainted, and the reasons for that disposition. He stated to him, that sir Simon had resigned him to the joint guardianship of himself and lord William Frazer, and that in the event of his death, he had appointed captain Frazer and his friend Bouverie, to act for him, in conjunction with that nobleman, and entreated that he would apply to one or other of them for advice in any case of difficulty.

From this moment William threw off the boy, and, so to speak, all at once started into manhood. The misconduct of his father, and the misfortunes of his

mother,

mother, made a strong and indelible impression on his mind. He became serious and reflective beyond his years, and endeavoured, by the most affectionate tenderness, to supply to his afflicted mother the place of every tender relationship. His uncle he regarded with a reverence approaching to adoration, while the bonds of friendship which united him to the youthful Bouverie, were, if possible, drawn more closely together.

The unexpected appearance of his father, at such a time, nearly overturned the hard-earned fortitude which he had struggled to support during the heart-rending ceremony; and the ardent boy turned from him with a shuddering sensation of horror.

The recollection of his uncle's last injunctions, however, rose to his mind, and checked the expression of contempt which hovered on his lips; and taking

taking hold of Bouverie's arm, he proceeded to where the carriages waited, followed by the baronet, captain Frazer, and Mr. Murray.

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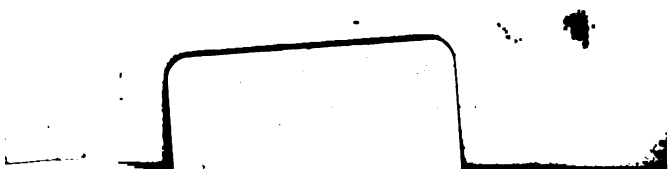
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